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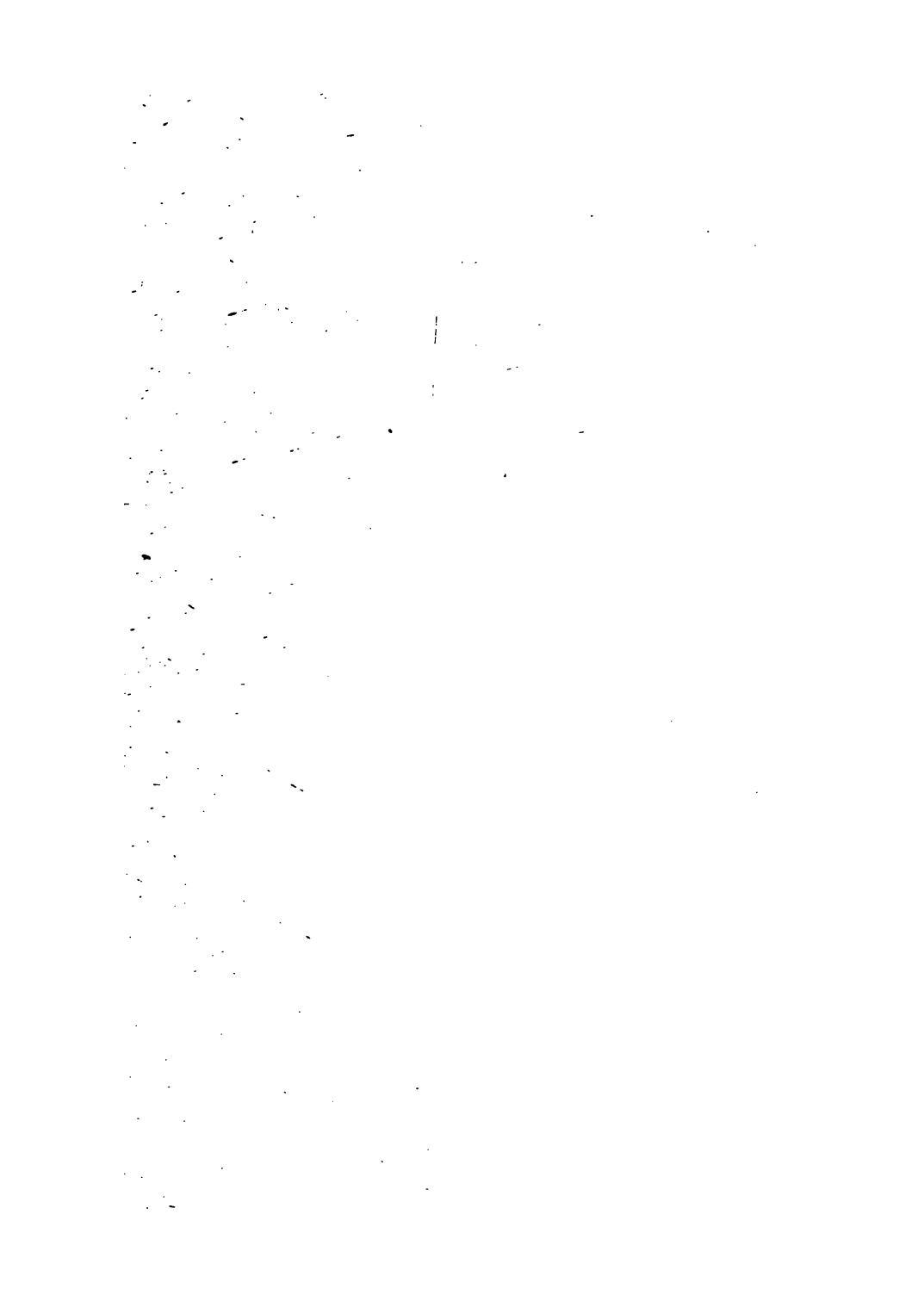




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## **EVERYMAN'S RELIGION**



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# EVERYMAN'S RELIGION

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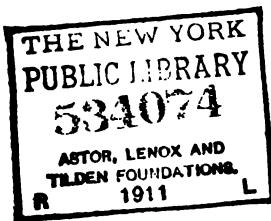
GEORGE HODGES

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**THE BACKGROUND OF  
RELIGION**



## THE BACKGROUND OF RELIGION



HE background of Every-man's Religion is the fact of mystery.

We live in a strange world, surrounded by surprises. After all the uncounted centuries of our residence here, the conditions of our life are still imperfectly understood. A part of the world is explained by science, and another part of the world is explained by philosophy. But the two together hardly do more than describe the surface of things.

Man has made his slow way towards knowledge by the light of a succession of discoveries. Now one determining fact or law, and then another, has come within our mental reach, and has changed the face of society. But we know that a thousand other facts and forces, not only beyond our reach but beyond our imagination, await us and our children.

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The increase of our knowledge serves to show the increased horizon of our ignorance. We perceive that the world is inconceivably more vast, more wonderful, and more mysterious than we had thought. At first, the discoveries seem to explain the universe. The doctrines of Copernicus, of Newton, and of Darwin seem to solve the problems of our life. But presently we find that they have but magnified the marvel of the world. They bring us to the heights of hills whence we look over into lands unvisited and boundless.

The world is compact and commonplace only to the dull and ignorant. A man may be so occupied with the details of his business as to give the matter no attention. He may keep his eyes so closely on his job as to be unaware of any background. He may be only vaguely and remotely conscious of the mystery in the midst of which he lives. Even so, there are inevitable times when the situation forces itself upon him. The mystery of birth, the mystery of death, and, between the two, the mystery of life, compel the

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most thoughtless and the most occupied to consider seriously the meaning of the world. The more we know and think, the more amazing is the mystery in which we live.

Mazzini said that everybody ought to study astronomy. "A man learns nothing if he has not learned to wonder, and astronomy, better than any other science, teaches him something of the mystery and grandeur of the universe."

The background of mystery is dimly visible in the starry sky. Beyond the sun and moon, along those far horizons whose incredible distances elude the calculations and even the guesses of astronomers, stand the stars. On a clear night, the unassisted eye sees a thousand stars; the telescope sees hundreds of thousands; the camera sees tens of millions. And the stars are suns. It is perceived by the delicate instruments of the observatory that some of them — perhaps all — have dark stars about them, like the earth and other planets about our sun. Each of the forty million stars may have a solar system of its own. We

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read with a new understanding the ancient attribute of God, "He telleth the number of the stars."

The nearest of these stars is so far distant that all ordinary measures of extension fail. The length of the foot-rule of the sky is six trillion miles. Six trillion miles is a light year: the journey which a ray of light, travelling at the rate of a hundred and eighty-six thousand miles a second, will accomplish in twelve months. The nearest of the fixed stars is more than four light years distant from the earth: twenty-six trillion miles. Some of them are so remote that their light must travel more than a hundred light years before it meets our eyes: more than six hundred trillions of miles. The little constellation of the Pleiades, twinkling like a group of fireflies in a mist, is millions of times farther from us than the sun; many of the stars which compose it are hundreds of times bigger than the sun, and the spaces which separate them are billions of miles long. To our sight it is the smallest constellation in the sky.

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Thus we stand at night on the surface of this dark star, the Earth, and look out into the immeasurable universe.

The stars are the symbol of mystery. They are the lights of undiscovered lands in comparison with which our whole planet is but the smallest island in a boundless ocean. They make the claim of man to the ownership of the world ridiculous. These vast other worlds, set at these incalculable distances, were made and are maintained without regard to us. They are the result of forces or of purposes which leave us altogether out of account. We still say, and never more sincerely than in the light of all our present knowledge, "When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?"

The relation of human knowledge to human ignorance is like the relation of the town to the stars. Here is our own town, along whose familiar streets we walk, with whose houses we are ac-

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quainted, where we have our various interests and occupations, whose area is accurately bounded and divided into voting districts, this small space of earth wherein we have our residence; and overhead are the stars.

Some people see no farther than the street. There is nothing in their life — at least in their customary life — which might not be included in a fair description of the town. They are like ants in an ant hill.

Imagine an ant hill in a public park. Of the trees and flowers and spreading lawns, of the ponds and the people, the ants are altogether unconscious. There is a soldiers' monument in the park, but the ants are unaware of the meaning of it; for them the tragedy, the self-sacrifice, and the achievement which it commemorates have no significance. There is the statue of a poet or of a statesman: the ant hill is at the very base of it; but it belongs to a world in which the ants have no place. There is a public meeting in the park, and men standing by the ant hill are thrilled with the brave words of a great

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speaker; but the ants go on, getting in their provisions for the winter. The ants at our feet and the stars over our heads teach the same lesson. When we look up at the starry heavens, we get an idea of what it means to contemplate the earth from the summit of an ant hill.

We are surrounded on all sides by realms of mystery. As the omission of a single sense would obliterate for us a great part of the world of our present knowledge, so the addition of a sense would bring into our consciousness new conditions of existence, wonderful beyond imagination. In the midst of these we live, without perceiving them; or faintly guessing at them, as the keener sight of a poet, a philosopher, or a prophet sees dimly something "deeply interfused" which he tries in vain to make us apprehend.

We cannot go in any direction without getting lost. Every blade of grass conducts us into the mystery of life; every pebble, into the mystery of matter. We ourselves are mysterious to ourselves. The mystery of our

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✓ birth answers to the mystery of our death. The mystic words spoken of King Arthur in the legend — “From the great deep to the great deep he goes” — are true of every one of us. After all the centuries, the very wind is as true a type of mystery as it was when Jesus talked with Nicodemus. Between the ant hills and the stars blow the mysterious winds. In a world pervaded through and through with mystery, we live our mysterious lives.

✓ The response of man to this everlasting fact of mystery is the beginning of religion.

We look upon the world not only with wonder, but with awe. We have an instinctive feeling that the world means not only power, but personality. In this vast universe, we are not alone. We perceive that the world is too great for us; the house is too big to have been made only for our accommodation. The universe of the stars is too ample for our residence, as the earth is too vast for the ants. The inconceivable ranges of mystery imply other existence than our own. Both our

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imagination and our reason go behind the mystery of life to a maker and maintainer of it all. Both in history and in psychology wonder passes into worship. The primitive man fell upon his knees and upon his face in the presence of the starry sky. And we ourselves, when we think about these things, when we recognize anew the strangeness, the grandeur, the vastness, and the marvel of the world, are lifted out of the routine of our customary thought into a new consciousness of our dependence upon unseen powers.

This perception of a divine presence in the midst of the mysteries appears in primitive religion.

To the man who sees the sky from the forest or from the desert, undisturbed by the intervening roofs of houses and by the shining of the lights of the streets, the stars are either divine powers moving about by their own will, or are moved by divine hands. So he says his prayers to the stars.

This impulse to adore the sky survives the faith on which it is founded. It is plain to Job that the God of the

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hosts of the stars made the cluster of the Pleiades, and the bands of Orion, and the signs of the Zodiac, and the Great Bear; yet he confesses that when he beheld the sun when it shined, and the moon walking in brightness, his heart was secretly enticed, and his mouth kissed his hand. He understood that this was wrong, but he felt it to be a mighty temptation. The thought in his heart had the sanction of innumerable generations of his ancestors. The sky, the wind, the fire, the earth, are the natural symbols of primitive religion.

By and by, the substance is separated from the symbol, and the worshipper, kneeling beside the altar on which blazes a sacrificial fire, adores One who is above all these, unknown and unimaginable, yet of present power, the determining force of every life. Because life in the primitive world is difficult and beset with terror, and beasts and men are cruel, and the world is full of fear, the unseen powers are feared. In the presence of the mystery of the universe, man in his

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smallness and weakness is afraid. He implores the powers to be good to him. But always and everywhere he perceives the divine. That is the significant fact. The details are crude and mistaken, but the recognition is plain. This is the extraordinary characteristic which essentially distinguishes us from the other animals. They see the sky as well as we do, — perhaps better, — but man alone says in adoration, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

The perception of the divine presence is expressed in poetry.

Men try to put into words the feelings which the mystery of life stirs in their souls. There is something more in the world than can be touched or seen ; something which cannot be described by geologists or astronomers or botanists ; some indefinable, elusive presence ; some light shining which never shone on sea or shore, — to this the poet is responsive. He perceives a presence,

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“Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.”

The Psalms are filled with this religious interpretation of the world. Men are summoned in these verses to praise the Lord with thanksgiving, “Who covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth, and maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, and herb for the use of men; Who giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes. He sendeth out His word and melteth them, He bloweth with His wind and the waters flow.” “O praise the Lord of heaven, praise Him in the height. Praise Him, all ye angels of His; praise Him, all His host. Praise Him sun and moon; praise Him all ye stars and light.” The whole world is called to join in thanks and praise to Him by whose might and loving-kindness all things are. And in this song humanity is to carry the refrain: “Young men

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and maidens, old men and children, praise the name of the Lord; for His name only is excellent, and His praise above heaven and earth."

This perception of the divine in the universe, which the priest of the primitive religion endeavors to express by his flaming sacrifice, and the poet by the music of his verse, appears also in the devotions of the mystic.

The mystic waits for no precedents, depends on no authority, asks no aid of priest or sacrament, reads no books. He beholds this splendid world, of wonder and might and mystery, and in the midst of it, plain and clear to the sight of his soul, he sees God.

In the Old Testament, he is Isaiah, saying: "I saw the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and I heard the song of those who cried one to another, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.'" In the New Testament, he is St. Paul, saying: "At midday I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which jour-

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neyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice." The religion of those men was at first hand. They spoke out of their own original and direct experience of the divine. The Master comes, the supreme mystic, perceiving God in the wind, in the impartial sun and rain, in the harvest, in the common life. Looking up into the sky, he says, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me, and I know that Thou hearest me always."

The mystics follow in these steps, seeing visions, climbing celestial ladders into paradise, having their feet on the earth and their heads in the clouds, perceiving already the new heavens promised of old, and sure of the divine in the mystery of the world, because they have looked for themselves, and have seen God with their own eyes, in Whom we live and move and have our being. For them, too, the skies shine and voices are heard with messages and praises.

When we ask, what is the value of these responses to the mystery of the

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world? what is the validity of these recognitions of the divine in the universe? we find that they rest upon two strong foundations.

They stand upon the foundation of universal experience. ✓

When we find men always and everywhere conscious of a divine presence, we perceive that we are in possession of a compelling testimony. It is upon this sort of evidence that all our knowledge proceeds. When it is observed that always and everywhere there is a tendency of material bodies toward the earth, the universal fact signifies a universal law. When we observe that man is inevitably and invincibly religious, that the impulse to pray is in all races and conditions of men, and that the devotion of the primitive priest, the emotion of the poet, and the confidence of the mystic are expressions of a common human consciousness, we perceive that there is something to which this consciousness is a response.

Life is not made up of eating and drinking, of working and sleeping, or of

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the interests and the pleasures which compose so considerable a part of the common day, nor does it consist in the abundance of the things which we possess. It is not contained within the limits of any journey by land or sea. We rush about with heads down, upon this errand and upon that, but overhead shine the reminding stars. And in the midst of the stars, as in the midst of all our most customary experiences, in the heart of the unescapable mystery of our existence, dwells the divine.

And this, to which the universal experience bears witness, is evidenced also by reasonable inference.

We argue from the known to the unknown. We interpret the world by our understanding of ourselves. The highest form of being of which we are conscious is man, with personality, will, reason, and conscience. When we would go beyond that vague sense of the divine in the world which is instinctive with us, and somehow present the divine to our imagination and our faith, we cannot do other than begin with our own selves. It is plain that the soul

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of the universe is in no way inferior to us. All that is best in us must somehow exist in Him. All our good qualities must have their counterparts in Him. The Divine Being, the Soul of the Universe, Who dwells in the light which no man may approach unto, and Who is revealed in the fact of mystery, is made manifest — so far as He can be manifested to our understanding — in our nature, created in His image.

Here is the background of religion. This is the idea of the world in which all worship is contained. When the world is thought of in this way, worship is imperative. This is that gravity of mind, that sense of wonder, of awe, of reverence, in which all flowers and fruits of religion grow as in a fertile soil. The Christian faith is contained in it, as the tree is in the seed. Religion is a recognition of the meaning of the world. The sense of it may be subordinated or even effaced by ways of living which make people blind and deaf to the great facts of life, but the facts recall us. Even they who live for the most part without God in the world come to some

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consciousness of Him in the midst of the supreme crises of their joy or sorrow. None of us is as sensitive as he ought to be to the divine presence. But the divine is present. We have only to look about us with an understanding heart. We lift up our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help, and from the hills to the stars, and from the stars to Him who made the stars.

**THE FUNDAMENTAL FACTS  
OF RELIGION**



## THE FUNDAMENTAL FACTS OF RELIGION

HE background of religion is the presence of the mystery of the world. But this mystery, when we consider it attentively, resolves itself into two fundamental facts: the being of God and the soul of man. They are so fundamental that without them religion is impossible, while with them religion is imperative.

Without God and the soul, religion is impossible.

For religion consists in the relation between the soul and God. The symbol of that relation may be a sacrifice, wherein man takes of his best and offers it to the unseen powers; it may be a sacrament, wherein man, holding out hands of prayer and expectation, asks for help from heaven and enters into communion with the spiritual world; it may be a creed, wherein man pro-

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claims his understanding of the universe, and his interpretation of experience, and his faith in the invisible ; it may be a life, lived according to the instructions of conscience. Some relation between man and God is necessary to religion. There must be a soul to speak, and God to answer.

And with God and the soul, religion is imperative.

Whoever is conscious of God above and of the soul within must enter into the relation which that consciousness implies. The consciousness may be dim, being obscured by dulness of mind, or by hard conditions of life, or by evil courses ; it may be felt but rarely : but the crises disclose it. They who imagine themselves to be living without God in the world, and who seem both to themselves and to their neighbors to be getting along very comfortably under that condition, come swiftly and surely into another mind when a great joy or a great sorrow dispels for a moment the conventional satisfaction which hides the supreme realities.

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The expression of the consciousness of God and of the soul may not be made in the accustomed ways. The man may not go to church, nor account himself as belonging to the company of the religious. But he is religious after all; inevitably and invincibly religious. The habit of public worship is admirable, but it is only an aid to religion; it is not of itself religion. There is an immeasurable amount of silent but sincere religion; a great, unknown number of persons who, though they are not seen in the churches, are endeavoring in their own way to live the spiritual life. They care about these things. They believe in God and in the soul, and they think some of the thoughts, and pray some of the prayers, and do many of the deeds which that belief implies. It is from this multitude of the unsuspected saints that they will come whom Jesus describes as meeting the awards of the final judgment with a great surprise.

To prove the fundamental facts of religion is very difficult. But this difficulty is in no way peculiar to religion.

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It arises in part from the nature of things. God and the soul cannot be seen or felt or tested by the senses.

A generation ago, it was commonly held by men of science that the facts which cannot be proved by the senses are not facts. They are beliefs or guesses. All facts, it was said, can be stated in terms of matter. Both science and philosophy were materialistic. But this was only the temporary effect of the amazing progress of the age in natural science, in the discovery and application of natural forces. So many wonders were at that time coming into view in the earth and in the stars, so many old problems were being solved by the perception of universal laws of nature, that it appeared as if these laws would explain everything. Men confidently anticipated the abolition of mystery. They expected to be able to interpret the whole world, with God and the soul included, in terms of nature, as the action of material forces, as a combination of material facts.

To-day, the pendulum of thought

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swings back. The emphasis of interest passes from chemistry to psychology. A whole new range of facts comes into sight. Men said, Oxygen is a fact, carbon is a fact, hills and stars are facts. But it is now perceived that consciousness is a fact; personality is a fact; memory, reverence, affection, faith, are facts. It is plain that there is a multitude of mightily important facts which cannot be seen or tested by the senses. It is true that God and the soul cannot be proved by the tests of the senses. But this is also true of matter itself. The nature of matter eludes all material tests. The existence of matter cannot be proved by instruments of precision; neither can life, nor will, nor personality; nor the soul, nor God.

The difficulty of proving the fundamental facts of religion, which thus arises from the nature of things, is further increased by the nature of man.

These facts are not only spiritual, but moral. That means that the perception of them depends on character. They are not only outside the scope of

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instruments of precision ; they are also beyond the range of processes of reason. They depend on the character of him who judges. And here, again, they share this condition with other sides of life. The difficulty is real and great, but it is in no way peculiar to religion. It belongs also to art and music and letters.

How shall we convince the unappreciative ? How shall we answer one who maintains that the works of the old masters are all foolish, and are not to be compared with the pictures in the illustrated magazines ; or who believes that the old sculptures in the museums ought to be thrown out with other broken and battered things upon the rubbish heap ? How shall we argue with the Shah of Persia who was greatly pleased with the tuning of the orchestra, and greatly bored by the symphony ? How shall we persuade those who do not care for poetry ? Here is the book which to us is filled with noble thought, splendidly expressed, a book of joy, of help, of inspiration, which we have read so

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often that we know a great part of it by heart; and to this book our neighbor is altogether indifferent, he turns its leaves and lays it down, to him it has no value. What shall we say? How shall we prove that the book is a great book? How shall we establish against incredulity the excellence of the art or of the music which ministers to our souls?

These illustrations are a commentary on the words of Jesus, "The pure in heart shall see God." The sight of the divine is not a reward given to the pure in heart, but it is an experience which is conditioned upon purity of heart as the sight of the world is conditioned upon good eyes. Thus it is said again that in order to know the doctrine, whether it be of God, we must live the life. One whose concerns are wholly material, whose interests are altogether of the body, is thereby incapacitated. The indifference or unbelief of such a one is no verdict on the fundamental facts, but on the mind which is unappreciative of the facts; as the distaste of the reader for the book may be a

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verdict not upon the book, but upon the reader.

When we say, then, that the fundamental facts of religion are difficult to prove, we cast no doubt upon the facts. We only affirm that they have the quality of all fundamental facts. They are difficult to prove because of the nature of things, like life and will and personality ; and they are difficult to prove because of the nature of man, like music and art and letters.

Proof is difficult, but there are two kinds of strong evidence.

There is the evidence of the uncommon experience of uncommon people.

I mean the poets, the prophets, the mystics, who come to the realization of God by direct approach, who perceive God and the soul by the exercise of faculties which in them are extraordinarily developed. And I mean the philosophers, who come to the perception of God and the soul by the approach of reason, finding God in the order of the world, and the nature of God in the nature of man, being able to work out these conclusions by virtue

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of unusual gifts of intellect, so that they make discoveries in the spiritual world as other men make discoveries in untravelled lands. These uncommon people assert these fundamental facts on the basis of their uncommon experience.

And there is another evidence, in the common experience of common people.

The fundamental facts of religion, as of life, rest on broad bases. They are not dependent on the vision of any prophet, on the dream of any mystic, nor on the logic of any philosopher. They rest on common sense. And common sense is the invincible assertion of the human mind. It is the thing which we must say, no matter what arguments may be urged to the contrary.

For example, philosophers have doubted the existence of the material world; or, at least, have denied that it corresponds to its impression on our senses. And it is manifestly true that our knowledge of the material world is of necessity derived from our senses, which are only five in number, and every one of them notoriously imper-

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fect. But this doubt does not affect us. We do not care what the philosophers say. We are satisfied that our knowledge of the world is sufficient for all practical purposes. We take the world on the evidence of common sense.

Also, philosophers have doubted the freedom of the will. All things, they say, are determined for us. We act by necessity. We have no choice. And these conclusions they draw not only from metaphysics, but from theology. But this doubt makes no difference with us. We may not be able to answer the arguments of the philosophers. They may prove till we are helpless and speechless that neither the will nor the world has any true existence. But somehow, we know better.

We may listen likewise to the reasoning which forbids us to believe in God and the soul. It is not necessary for our peace of mind to be able to contradict it. The reasoning may appear invincible. The chain of logic may bind us hand and foot; we may have no

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answer; but we know better. We all know better. Against all doubt, we set the barrier of common sense.

Thus we perceive that man has always believed in God and in the soul. Everywhere, the world over, and through all time, is the presence of mystery. And in the mystery of the world men have always found the beginning of religion. It is as universal as humanity. Faith in God is as characteristic of man as the love of our neighbor. Each of these human characteristics has appeared under strange forms, has begun in crude manners, has grown out of unpromising beginnings, has only gradually and very slowly come into clearness, into excellence, into its strength; and there are individuals in every community who seem to contradict them both. But thus they are. Man is a social and religious being; and as religious as social.

Religion is a universal human fact. The earliest traces of man, away back in the ages of ice, show him burying in the grave of his friend that which may be of use to one who has survived death;

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he knows that even after the body, the soul lives. And the first clear sight of man reveals him with hands uplifted, making his prayer to God. The fundamental facts of religion are the common property of the race. They are validated by the common sense of common men.

Moreover, we perceive that the affirmation of God and of the soul brings the world and all our life into harmony and reason, while a denial throws us into immediate and inextricable confusion, and defeats not only our religious aspirations, but our processes of thought. Then we argue that the explanation of the universe which works best is most likely to be true. We bring the matter to the test which determines the validity of a universal law: does the law actually work? does it interpret the facts?

Of course, a great amount of mystery remains, in religion as in science, and there are questions unanswered and perhaps unanswerable. But we expect that. In this vast universe of mystery, wherein our place is so microscopic,

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and wherein, as a wise man says, "Nobody knows a seven billionth of one per cent about anything," difficulties are certain to survive all explanation. But the fundamental assertions of religion interpret so much of the world with satisfaction that we set down the remaining difficulties and mysteries to the account of our ignorance. Religion makes the world intelligible. The fundamental certainties, which in philosophy are called convictions and in religion are called beliefs, the consciousness of the being of God and of the soul of man, explain both our observation and our experience of life.

What do the fundamental facts of religion mean? They mean a thousand things. They imply religion in all its details and consequences. But in the large they signify the everlasting reality of the life of the spirit.

There is a world within our consciousness whose vital phenomena, instead of being light, heat, motion, are will, love, reverence, faith, the virtues, prayer. In that world, it is our privi-

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lege to live. A good working description of life is that which defines it as response to environment. We live in proportion as we are responsive to our surroundings. In order to find out whether a dog lying by the road is asleep or dead, the thing to do is to poke him with a stick; if he does not respond, he is a dead dog. A stone is dead because it does not respond to anything. A plant lives, and is sensitive to sun and wind and rain and earth. An animal lives more because it is in relation with more of life; and a man lives more and more according as his correspondence with the world is widened and varied. If he has five sound senses, he lives that much. If he knows astronomy, geology, and botany, he lives so much the more. If he understands and appreciates books and art and music, he increases both the quantity and the quality of his life. Then, beyond and within the world to which all these belong, is the world of the spirit.

Religion is an interpretation of the mystery of the world. It is an answer

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to questions concerning which both science and philosophy are silent. It tells us whence we came and whither we go. It asserts the presence and the preëminence of the spirit in us and in the world about us. It declares that all matter and all life have worthy meanings.

Religion is also the experience which belongs to a world thus interpreted. It is the response of the soul of man to the life of God. It can be had in its fulness only by the cultivation of the soul. One whose body is developed, and whose mind is developed, while his soul is undeveloped, belongs to the defective classes. One whose interests are altogether in his business, or in his recreation, has something the matter with him. He is living a narrow, limited, and defective life. He is missing a great range of human privilege. He is failing to avail himself of the best rights of man. He perceives sometimes, when the experiences of life reveal the souls of his friends, that there is a joy, an uplift, a strength, a blessing, in which he has no part.

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Thus we understand the words of Jesus, when He said, "I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." The purpose of religion is not only the salvation of man out of his sins. Its part is not merely that of the police whose business is to protect society and keep the peace. Its function is not simply to prohibit, like a series of warning signs. It is to direct us into happiness. The characteristic of religion is abundant life.

Here man truly lives. Here he is responsive and sensitive to the whole of his environment. Here he realizes himself. Here he stands upright in the completed glory of his normal manhood. And entering into the fulness of life, he enters also into the fulness of satisfaction. He has learned the secret of abiding happiness. His heart is filled with the joy of living, and with gratitude that he is alive and appreciative of the seen and of the unseen. He goes about among his neighbors ; he looks upon the earth and

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sky ; he encounters the experiences of the common day ; saying, under his breath, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise His holy name."



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THE relation between the soul of man and the life of God, which constitutes religion, is, indeed, instinctive, but it needs to be made definite. It cannot well be left to the unaided experience of the individual man. The individual may not be able to perceive God either clearly or truly. By reason of the shortcomings of his mind, or of the defects of his character, he may fall into error concerning God, or may lose sight of Him.

Moreover, in so great a matter as this, the individual needs to avail himself of the privilege of the race. In religion, as in science, in art, and in politics, he is entitled to the results of past experience. The world into which he comes is an old world. Little as is the total fund of our knowledge of it, such knowledge as we have is mightily useful. On the basis of it, each new

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generation begins. We are the children of all the inventors, reasoners, discoverers, of the past. We enter into their labors. We are taught in our youth what they learned with pain and patience in the maturity of their studies. We begin with their books : books of science, books of geography and history, books of religion.

A number of the most useful of the books of religion are bound together in the Bible. They contain the experiences and conclusions of men who were masters of the religious life. They bring to us the results of their study of the soul of man and of the being of God. They tell us what God said to them.

Such a communication from God to men may be made in one or other of two ways : by dictation, or by inspiration.

According to the doctrine of dictation, God has revealed His will to men by speaking in audible words out of the sky, or by guiding the hands of the writers of sacred books. The prophet by whom, under these conditions, God

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speaks, contributes nothing himself. He is simply the recipient of a divine communication, and comes to us from God as a servant sent on an errand with a message. An example of this doctrine is the Koran; which Mohammed, in a vision, saw in the library of heaven, and there copied page by page, and word by word. A symbol of it is the ancient bas-relief of Hammurabi, king of Babylon, receiving his code of law from the hands of the sun-god.

The Christians of the early church were restrained from adopting the doctrine of dictation by certain convincing facts.

They were influenced by the fact of the unbound book.

When the Christian religion began, there was no completed Bible. There was no book to which one could point and say, "Behold the word of God." The Old Testament, finished as to the composition of its books, was unfinished as to their collection. In the synagogue the Bible was kept in a box, and this box, being opened, was found to contain a considerable number of rolls of

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manuscript. On some of these rolls the books of the law were written, from Genesis to Deuteronomy; on others the books of the prophets. But the number of the rolls differed. There was still in progress a long debate as to the admission or rejection of certain books. Shall we include in the Bible the Song of Solomon, which is a collection of lyrics of love with no reference to religion? Shall we include the book of Esther, in which the name of God is not mentioned? What shall we do with the books of the Maccabees, with the romance of Bel and the Dragon, with the philosophy of Ecclesiastes which appears to deny the future life? These questions were not answered till the end of the first Christian century. In the days of the apostles, the Old Testament was an unbound book, whose table of contents had not been determined.

As for the New Testament, one church had a copy of one Gospel, another had a copy of another; here were certain epistles of St. Paul, there were other epistles. Gradually, by inter-

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change and transcription of these treasures, the possessions of the different churches increased. But even then, there were books whose value was debated. What shall we say about the epistle of St. James, and about the epistle of St. Barnabas? What shall we do about the Revelation of John, and about the Revelation of Enoch? These questions were not finally answered till the end of the fourth century. During all that time the Bible was unbound.

The early Christians were influenced also by the precedent of freedom.

Jesus had dealt very informally with the Old Testament. He had quoted even the Commandments without regard to verbal accuracy. He had criticised and altered the moral standards of the ancient Scriptures. The phrase, "Ye have heard it said by them of old time," means, "Ye have read in the Bible thus and so"; but "I," He said, "tell you other than that." And this example of the free handling of the Scriptures had been followed by the apostles. When they met at Jerusalem

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to debate the questions raised by the mission of St. Paul to the Gentiles, the chief point at issue was the authority of the Bible. The Bible, declaring the word of God, set forth the law of Moses. Concerning that law, the Jews held a doctrine of dictation. These words, they said, were spoken by the mouth of God. The Christians, assembled in convention, decided not to obey the Bible. The book of Leviticus enjoins the law of Moses, but it seems good, they said, to the Holy Ghost and to us not to enforce it. These precedents of freedom made it impossible for the early Christians to hold the doctrine that the Bible is binding in detail upon the conscience. Some parts of it are true and in force to all eternity, but other parts have only a temporary value.

In addition to these restraining facts, — the fact of the unbound book, and the fact of the precedent of freedom, — the early Christians were further influenced by the fact of the living voice.

Even after the Bible was bound, it was not a sole authority. Side by

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side with the Bible, sometimes interpreting it, sometimes adding to it, was the church. The divine promise that the Holy Spirit should lead men into truth continued beyond the completion of the Scripture, and made the history of the church a contemporary Bible for the guidance of the will of man, and for the disclosure of the will of God. Thus it was the church, and not the Bible, which decided that ~~the~~ children might be baptized. It was the church, and not the Bible, which retained the sacrament of the breaking of the bread and declined the sacrament of the washing of the feet.

Long after, beginning in the seventeenth century and extending into the nineteenth, a doctrine of dictation was, indeed, maintained. The book was now bound, the living voice was discredited by the queer things which it was reported to have said during the Middle Ages, and the exercise of freedom was mainly directed towards ecclesiastical changes. In the place of the infallible authority of the church was placed the infallible authority of the

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Scripture, and this was logically developed into theories of verbal dictation and inerrancy. The Mohammedan idea of the Koran became for the moment the Christian idea of the Bible. And it was held that this idea is essential to the maintenance of the Christian religion. For if there are errors in the Bible, we have no reliable authority in religion. The necessary qualification of a guide is to be trustworthy. If the Bible is mistaken in anything, it may be mistaken — so ran the argument — in everything.

Out of this theory of the method of revelation, the Christian faith was rescued by two considerations.

First, by consideration of the fact that there are actually errors in the Bible. There they are: in science, in history, in morals, even in theology. We know that the world was not created in six days; we know that when the book of Kings gives an account of an event and the book of Chronicles gives a contradictory account of the same event, they cannot both be right; we know that the imprecatory psalms and the Sermon

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on the Mount teach a very different ideal of conduct; and we perceive that between the vision of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, at the beginning of the Bible, and the vision of God, high and lifted up, adored by all the saints, at the end of the Bible, there is a long progress in spiritual knowledge.

And to this consideration of the fact of error was added the consideration of the fallacy which exaggerates the importance of these errors. The old proposition — mistaken in one thing, mistaken in everything — may do very well in logic, but it does not work at all in actual life. Our senses, for example, are notoriously defective. They are mistaken not in one way only, but in a hundred ways, and bring us misleading reports of the world in which we live. But they are good enough for practical purposes. They are a sufficient authority for our daily life. So it is with the Bible. Every book that ever was made, in the Bible or out of it, contains some error; because no man is infallible or omniscient. Error

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and human nature belong together. But errors in detail do not invalidate the book. In his great sonnet on "Chapman's Homer," Keats says that the Pacific Ocean was discovered by ✓ Cortez. Not at all; it was discovered by somebody else. But that does not hinder for a moment the splendor of the sonnet. To hold that errors discredit the supremacy of the Bible over the spiritual life is as irrelevant as to dismiss a pilot because he is ignorant of botany. Back comes the foolish passenger from an interview with the pilot, crying: "Friends, the ship is lost. Our pilot is untrustworthy. I find that he knows nothing whatever about intensive farming, that he is very imperfectly acquainted with the history of the crusades, and that his ideas about the tariff are absurd." But it is the alarm of the foolish passenger that is absurd.

"Why," says Coleridge, "should I not believe the Scriptures throughout dictated, in word and thought, by an infallible Intelligence? For every reason that makes me prize and reverence these Scriptures. Because the doctrine

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in question petrifies at once the whole body of Holy Writ with all its harmonious and symmetrical gradations. This breathing organism, the doctrine in question turns at once into a colossal Memnon's head, a hollow passage for a voice."

We give over, then, the doctrine of dictation as explaining the method of the making of the Bible, and return to the doctrine of inspiration.

It is true that in so doing we abandon the definite for the indefinite. The doctrine of dictation may be stated clearly and precisely; the doctrine of inspiration is not so easily defined. So much the better. So much the likelier is it to be true. For whatever involves the element of the divine cannot be brought into simple, compact, and complete statement.

According to the doctrine of inspiration, there are two kinds of people, common people and uncommon people.

The uncommon people are distinguished from their neighbors by their ability to see more, to understand more, and to do more. Thus at Athens all

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sorts of citizens went out to the hill Pentelicus to quarry stone for building. The common people built commonplace houses; the uncommon people built the Parthenon. Thus Beethoven wrote the Fifth Symphony and Shakespeare wrote "Hamlet" because they were uncommon men. The controversy as to the authorship of the plays arises from the apparent inconsistency between the commonness of Shakespeare and the production of these works of genius. Bacon was evidently an uncommon man. So in science, Copernicus and Newton were uncommon men. It is characteristic of these men, whether they apply themselves to music, to poetry, or to scientific investigation, that they are sensitive to impressions, and have an instinctive understanding of the uses and meanings of things. A usual word to express this singular faculty is genius. But in religion, the word is inspiration. Hosea and Isaiah, St. John and St. Paul, were uncommon men. They were as alert to the significance of the world of the spirit as Copernicus and

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Darwin were alert to the significance of the world of matter. They were peculiarly sensitive to spiritual influences. They were different, like Shakespeare and Beethoven, from all their neighbors.

Now, at infrequent intervals, often marking great eras of progress, an uncommon man perceives a new truth. Copernicus did. He saw the sun standing still. In comparison with this, the adventure of Joshua was insignificant. To Joshua the sun seemed to stand still. But to Copernicus, there it stood ; and there it stands still to this day. Newton perceived new truth ; Darwin perceived new truth. The thing eludes explanation. Suddenly, into the mind of the uncommon man, comes a great, new, interpreting knowledge. In science, this is called discovery ; in religion, it is called revelation. Suddenly, into the soul of Abraham, of Moses, of Isaiah, came a new knowledge of God, illuminating life. God is love, says Amos. God is love, says Hosea. These are spiritual discoveries.

When we say that inspiration is the same thing in religion as genius in art

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and letters, and that revelation is the same thing in religion as discovery in science, we have not defined anything. All of these conditions and achievements belong together to the domain of mystery. But we have taken away an artificial distinction between these. We have shown that whatever difficulty is connected with the divine disclosure in the Bible is connected also with the divine disclosure in every range of thought and activity.

The result of revelation is the divine disclosure. It is not the communication of facts in science or in history. The statement that the world was made in a week is of no scientific assistance to us, but the statement that in the beginning God made the heavens and the earth is of everlasting value. The details of Hebrew history are of no more significance in themselves than the details of the history of the Greeks and Romans, but the continual perception of the divine presence and purpose in those old annals interprets all the history of the world. Neither is revelation the disclosure of an order of

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worship or of a system of morals. The old regulations are outworn and abandoned. What is revealed is the universal endeavor of man to unite himself with God, and to conform his life to the will of God.

Revelation is the disclosure of God : of the care of God, evidenced in nature, but uncertainly ; of the righteousness of God, to which history bears witness, but not always convincingly ; of the love of God, which we know, indeed, by our individual experience, but not with unfailing assurance. To reënforce and strengthen the faith which rests upon our common experience, come these strong, revealing visions of the uncommon people: of the prophets, speaking to the fathers ; of Jesus Christ, speaking in the very accents of the divine, to us. We may guess and doubt, but these men know. They have heard the voice of God. And what that voice has said to them they have written down, as best they could, in the Book of Inspiration and of Revelation, in the Word of God, for the saving of our souls.



## **RELIGION AND MIRACLE**



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THE books of the Bible, which thus put us in possession of the experiences and conclusions of the masters of religion concerning the being of God and the soul of man, are made difficult to-day to many men because some of them contain accounts of miracles. These miracles were formerly aids to faith, but they do not now so securely assist us. A new knowledge of the order of the world has changed our minds about the miracles. It has given us a somewhat different understanding both of their nature and of their importance.

Miracles are described in the Bible as "signs and wonders." They compel our admiration and astonishment; they are wonders. They assure us of the existence, the power, and the personal interest of God; they are signs. These

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two elements must be in combination to make a miracle. A mighty wind which blows a path across a sea is a marvel. If it thus makes a path, at the right moment, for a company of escaping slaves, it is a miracle.

The essential value of a miracle is in its disclosure of a divine personality. The result which the miracle accomplishes may be of high importance; the achievement may be a deliverance, a recovery, or a victory; but the supreme satisfaction is in the assurance that God cares. It is made plain that the unseen, heavenly powers are aware of us, and interested in us, and on our side.

Such an assurance we desire greatly. The background of religion is in the presence of mystery; the fundamental facts of religion are the being of God and the soul of man; and these are given a certain definiteness by the evidence of the uncommon people whose spiritual experiences are recorded in the Bible. But the heart of the matter is a sense of relation between man and God. It is indeed a great matter to

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be able to look out into the surrounding mystery of the world and cry, "O God!" But it is a far greater matter to be able to go on and complete the sentence in the words of the psalm, crying, "O God, thou art my God!" That is the essential thing.

We are perceiving, however, that this essential relationship may be certified without the evidence of what are commonly called miracles. We discover, as we read the Bible, that the Supreme Spiritual Master, while He cast no doubt upon the miraculous, and daily worked miracles, nevertheless gave to this whole side of the religious life a distinctly subordinate place. He was Himself conscious of the fatherly presence of the Unseen by other testimonies.

A significant example is His refusal to cast Himself down from a pinnacle of the temple. He was tempted, He said, to do that. In the desert, in preparation for His ministry, He was definitely rejecting certain possible principles of action. One of them He expressed by this dramatic symbol. He stands

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in vision on a pinnacle of the temple. The great court below is filled with worshippers. Shall He come down in their sight upheld by wings of angels? The effect will be to make it evident to all the people that He is a supernatural person. He is accredited by miracle. Thus attested, thus divinely commended, He will be accepted. The priests will receive Him, the Pharisees will welcome Him, the people will adore Him. The work of John the Baptist in preparing the way of the Lord will be insignificant in comparison with the splendid service of these attendant angels.

The meaning is plain. To leap from a height for the sake of defying the law of gravitation never entered into the mind of Jesus. But to perform a compelling and convincing miracle, to begin His ministry not as a carpenter from Nazareth but as a messenger from Heaven, — this was an attractive and reasonable proposition.

Why not do it? Because He knew the heart of man. He knew the difference between a faith which is founded

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in amazement, and a faith which is founded in quiet, gradual understanding and appreciation.

He expressed the difference with perfect clearness in the parable of the rich man and the beggar. The rich man in torment prays that the beggar may be sent to warn his brothers, lest they, following in his steps, come to that same place. The answer is, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." That is, the brothers and all their neighbors have plenty of churches, and in them the will of God is continually declared; that is enough. But the rich man is not satisfied. "Nay, Father Abraham," he cries, "but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham replies, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they repent, though one went unto them from the dead." The miraculous, as evidential and persuasive in religion, is here dismissed. It is set aside as ineffective. That which really counts for the conversion of the soul of man is the word of God, the will of God, the presence of

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God, in common life. This is why the Lord refused to force the faith of the people by a supernatural appearance. He had no confidence in either the faith or the repentance which was induced by that sort of testimony.

By and by, we find Him transfigured on the mountain, in the presence of three disciples. But the place to be transfigured is not a mountain, but a market. Let Him come out into the crowded city, and in the presence of a multitude beholding and adoring, let His face and His vesture shine like the sun. No, the transfiguration is not for purposes of evidence. The Lord prays, entering into the cloud which is a symbol of the divine presence, and as He prays His face is illumined, and the light of heaven shines upon Him. It is an intimate and sacred experience. The three are brought for a moment into a realization of the spiritual life of Jesus Christ. It is as remote from the purposes of evidence and argument as prayer is remote from the purposes of syntax and rhetoric.

Presently, He rises from the dead.

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Now, if ever, is the time for Him to show Himself openly to the world. He did not, indeed, come down from the cross to meet the conditions of a promised faith. "Let him come down from the cross," they said, "and we will believe." But here He is alive. Here is the occasion for the final convincing of all incredulity. Now let Him satisfy the Sadducees. Now, in the face of all men, let Him establish the certainty of the life eternal. No; He appears "not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God." From the point of view of the "evidences of Christianity," this careful selection of witnesses is a suspicious circumstance. But He is paying no attention to the evidences of Christianity. He is working no miracle for the greater confirmation of the faith. He is alive, and they whose souls are receptive see Him. It is the same sort of evidence which is intended in the saying, "The pure in heart shall see God."

Jesus Christ subordinated the miraculous. He did not deny it; He

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worked miracles. But he detested the idea of being followed as a miracle worker. He turned sharply to one whom He suspected of that kind of discipleship, saying, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." He said to Thomas, "Now you have seen a miracle, and you believe; blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed."

This is a blessing into which we ourselves may enter. Miracles have no place in our religious experience. God has never disclosed Himself to us in any astonishing manner, nor do we expect that He will do so. We do not anticipate any repetition of the plagues of Egypt, nor of the falling of the walls of Jericho, nor of a supply of food from heaven. In a true sense, all our food comes from heaven, but by processes which are at the same time divine and natural. And we are content to have it so. The miracles as dramatic marvels, blazing in our faces, we have never seen, nor do we expect to see them. We read about them in the ancient pages of the Bible.

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When, however, we come to consider the miracles of the Bible, we perceive that they are very few in number. They make so great an impression that they seem many, but they belong for the most part to three cycles only, in the long course of the history, and are grouped about six persons. There is a cycle of miracles at the beginning of the era of the Law, performed by Moses. There is a second cycle at the beginning of the era of the Prophets, performed by Elijah and Elisha. There is a third cycle at the beginning of the era of the Gospel, performed by our Lord, and by St. Peter and St. Paul.

Those three cycles may mean that in these initial periods God manifested Himself with unusual power and plainness. They may be analogous to the times when the mountains were erected on the earth, amidst the rushing of fire and flood and the grinding of ice; as our own days are analogous to the long, slow, silent processes whereby the mountains have since been shaped by the rain and the frost. It is a reasonable belief that God saw at certain

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times a need for an uncommonly direct exercise of His will in the affairs of men.

Or the cycles may mean that these eras so touched the imagination of the people that the only expression which they felt to be adequate to their sense of wonder was in terms of the miraculous. This is what appears in the lives of the saints. The devout biographer is trying to bring into the mind of a new generation a true idea of the holiness, the loving service, the spiritual greatness of the saint, in order that his good life may be abidingly influential, and that he may affect others in the future as he affected his loving and revering disciples in the past. But the spirit of the man cannot easily be brought into the conventional sentences of accurate biography. The lines must be deepened, the colors must be heightened, so that the canvas may be seen at a distance. The result is an honest narrative of miracles that never happened. The purpose of the biographer is akin to the intention, not of the photographer, but of the artist. He

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desires to reveal the splendor of the saint, and he perceives that this may best be done by the use of symbols. In art, the symbol which marks the saint is a halo of celestial light about his head. In history, the corresponding symbol is a miracle. Every ancient nation which honored its founders and champions expressed that honor in the language of the supernatural. It may be this habit of the old time which has thus magnified and glorified the genius of Moses and Elijah and Elisha.

Whatever explanation we may give to account for this singular concentration of the Bible miracles at these three points of time, the fact remains that these miracles were few in number.

Not only, however, were they few, but a study of them reveals the further fact that they were ineffective as aids to faith and to the progress of religion.

The miracles of the first cycle made but a passing impression upon either the Egyptians or the Jews. Again and again, in the face of them, Pharaoh refused to let the people go. Even at the last, after the accumulated stress

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of all the plagues, when he did let them go, he immediately changed his mind and followed them to bring them back. It was not made clear to him that he was contradicting the will of the Lord of all the earth. The ten miracles added together did not convince him. Neither did they withhold the Israelites from criticising and reviling Moses, refusing his advice, disobeying his commands, and rebelling against his administration. After all the mighty plagues, and the crossing of the Red Sea, and the thunderings of Sinai, and twenty miracles besides, they were with difficulty restrained from stoning him.

The most dramatic miracle of the second cycle was the calling down of fire on the sacrifice at Carmel. All the conditions were present which should make a miracle effective. It was an accepted test of the truth of one or other of two competing religions. Is Baal God, or is Jehovah God? "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." Then out of the cloudless sky flamed the fire of Jehovah, and consumed the sacrifice. But the next

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chapter in the story is an account of the flight of Elijah. The prophet who had called down the divine fire to prove the truth of his religion had not made a single convert. He fled for his life. And he confessed to God that so far as he knew he was the only man in the whole land who believed the creed which had been thus accredited by miracle.

The same condition attends the miracles of the New Testament. Nobody denied them, but the fact that they were accepted as true miracles did not make them convincing. For the moment they attracted crowds, so that the Pharisees said, "Behold, the world is gone after Him." But the Pharisees themselves, who made this comment on the raising of Lazarus, were affected by that miracle only to consult how they might put to death Lazarus as well as Jesus. The matter is made plain in the Acts, where the rulers, meeting in conference after the healing of the lame man, say, "What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest

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to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it." They cannot deny it. There is the miracle as plain as the shining sky. But that makes no difference whatever. The effect of the miracle, instead of gaining their allegiance, is to make them more determined enemies than ever. "That it spread no farther among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."

These two facts regarding the Bible miracles — that they are few in number, and that they are ineffective as aids to faith — illustrate Christ's habitual depreciation of the miraculous. He never raised the question as to whether the miracles really happened, but He insisted that they are not of any great spiritual value. They do not contain the essential revelation of God.

The subordination of the miraculous by the Supreme Spiritual Master, and the confirmation of His judgment by

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the evidence of Bible history, prepare us to meet the minimizing of the miraculous with a serene mind

Some miracles are subtracted from the old lists by a process of natural explanation. It is perceived, for example, that healing without medicine is in accordance with regular and partially understood laws of human nature. That Jesus performed wonderful cures is no longer doubted, but that the cures were such as to imply the personal and particular act of God appears unlikely. They belong, with all healing, to the application by man of the forces of the world to meet a special need.

Other miracles are subtracted by a process of literary interpretation. They are seen to derive their wonder not so much from the event as from the enthusiastic words in which the event is recorded. They belong not to prose, but to poetry, and are to be read, not in the light of science, but in the light of imagination. Thus Joshua commands the sun and moon to stand still, and they obey him, but the statement is quoted from a book of ballads.

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It has no connection with astronomy. It is a poet's way of expressing the greatness of a victory: the day seemed to be marvellously prolonged, so much did they accomplish in it; the sun and moon stood still to watch the Israelites as they chased the Canaanites down the long pass.

Jonah meets with a great fish. But Christian, also, in the "Pilgrim's Progress," meets with strange animals. They all belong together, not to the world of zoölogy, but to the world of parable. They are pictures which illustrate a story. Our Puritan ancestors disliked fiction, partly because it seemed to them out of keeping with so serious a world, and partly because the fiction of the Elizabethan age was not what they considered profitable or proper reading. Their dislike we have vaguely inherited. This is why some good people are troubled at the suggestion that there is fiction in the Bible. The fact, however, remains. In the Bible, even fiction is used for the setting forth of spiritual truth. Jesus so used it in the story of the Prodigal Son. The

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book of Daniel, the book of Esther, the book of Jonah, are instances of it. The great fish swims about and swallows Jonah in a story, not in a history.

Still other wonders are taken from the lists of miracles as being the statements of honest but mistaken observation. The Gadarene swine run violently down a steep place and perish in the water. That was the fact. The historian believed that the panic of the swine was caused by the entrance into them of a thousand devils. That was his interpretation of the fact. Such a conclusion was easy and natural in those days. A different observer, differently educated, might have had a different opinion.

There was a pool in Jerusalem, called Bethesda, whose water singularly moved. It lay still for a time, and then suddenly began to bubble; and this stirring of the water was repeated again and again, day after day. A sentence written into the fifth chapter of St. John so long after the making of that Gospel that the early manuscripts do not contain it, says that "an angel

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went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water." That was a common explanation. It shows how the plain man, looking on at that phenomenon, beheld a miracle. As a matter of fact, the pool of Bethesda is an intermittent spring, and the troubling of the water is entirely due to natural causes.

Will this process of subordination and of subtraction result at last in the elimination of the miraculous? Will the miracles of the Bible take their final place with the miracles of the fairy stories? No: for several reasons.

The miraculous will endure by reason of the fact of mystery.

Nobody knows enough, nor will anybody ever know enough, to explain everything. Even in the face of the most sober and most accurate reason, this is a strange world in which almost anything may happen. The endeavor to write all life in plain prose, and to bring all experience into the ordered range of common law, will never succeed. The world is too big, and the known part of it is too little for our

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legislation. The universe will never be brought under our cultivation like a garden of useful vegetables, fenced and weeded and planted in straight lines. It is more like an endless forest, containing mountains and rivers, inhabited by uncounted forms of life, defying us to bring it into subjection to our rules. The miracles belong, with the colors of the clouds and the odors of the flowers, to the everlasting poetry of the world.

The miraculous will endure by reason of the facts of history.

There has been an experience of miracle. It has not come into the lives of many people, but it has entered with conviction and splendor into the lives of some people, and they have done great things in consequence of it. The evident course of history has been turned this way and that a hundred times by miracle. Something has happened for which nobody has ever found an adequate explanation in the usual course of nature. God has exercised His special will in the affairs of men.

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The miracles which have affected history do not satisfy, indeed, the old idea of a miracle as an interference with the laws of the life of the world. They are rather to be defined as a divine use of the material forces of the world. Thus the Red Sea does not suddenly part without a reason; it is blown back by a strong east wind. The Jordan does not run dry without a visible cause; it is dammed by falling banks, so that it stands "on a heap." Such events have happened at other times. The disclosure of God in them is the blowing of the wind and the falling of the bank just at the right moment. A miracle is not an interruption, but a direction, of the processes of the universe.

The miraculous will endure by reason of a fact in psychology: the fact of the reality of the will.

If there is a will in man, there is a will in God; else He is less than we are. And if God has a will, the miraculous, even in its most dramatic forms, is forever both possible and reasonable. We work miracles ourselves; that is,

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we bring our will to bear as a determining factor upon the constant sequence of cause and effect. We perceive in our own experience that there is such a thing as a spiritual cause. The ball is falling, but we stop it; the garden is withering, but we water it; the patient is failing day by day, but we introduce a new remedy; things are going to the bad, but we intervene and reënforce the good. The miracle is just this, in the realm of the divine. God can work miracles, because we can. It is highly probable that if He cares as much about people as we do, He will work miracles upon due occasion; though it is probable that, in His infinite and foreseeing wisdom, such occasions will be very few. A denial of the miraculous is an affirmation of the impotence of God. It maintains that we live in a closed universe. It substitutes an unregarding law for a paternal personality. It contradicts the free will of God. God must work miracles in order to assure us of His presence and His care.

The progress of our knowledge will

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not eliminate the miraculous, but it will enlarge our perception of it. It will transfer our interest from the infrequent disclosure of God in the marvellous and the dramatic to the constant disclosure of God in the ordinary course of daily life.

Our interest in the infrequent disclosure of God is due, in part, to our natural delight in the wonderful. The meadow is full of bushes, but Moses turns aside to examine the strange bush which burns. That is human nature. But a part of our interest is due also to a common theory of the remoteness of God. It has been believed by many that God, having made the world, went back to heaven, and thereafter paid no particular attention to our affairs except to intervene sometimes by miracle. Under the stress of this belief, the miracle was not only a disclosure of God, but the only real disclosure that we have. The miraculous was our only evidence of the being, the will, and the nature of God. Every miracle, then, which was explained, and thus by explanation taken over into the

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natural order, weakened by just so much our faith in the spiritual world.

But we do not now believe in the remoteness of God. We do not believe in an absent God, Who manifests Himself only in the tremendous crises of life. Our faith is in the God of whom St. Paul said "in Him we live and move and have our being." We perceive an ever present, an all-pervading, an unending disclosure of God in all the world, in all our life. God is in the universe as the sun is in the world, as the soul is in the body, — the condition of all existence, the inspiration of all being, the motive of all progress, the mind of all thought, the conscience of all duty, the heart of all love. He is revealed not only in the past, but in the present, not only to the fathers, but to us, and not only in the infrequent wonders of the world, but in those constant wonders of nature and experience which are seen by those who have the eyes to see them.

Indeed, it is in the miracle of the commonplace, not in the miracle of the crisis, that God is most evidently

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manifested. This is his accustomed disclosure. "The undivineness of the natural, and the unnaturalness of the divine," has well been called "the great heresy of popular thought respecting religion." One comes and says, "I have had a great manifestation of the providence of God: everybody in the car was killed but me." But another says, "I have had a greater revelation of the providence of God than that: we went a thousand miles, and all arrived in perfect safety."

The heart of the whole matter is the reality of a direct and personal relation between God and man. We want to be sure that God is interested in us, and concerned about us. We want to be sure that God cares. This assurance is based, not on the uncertain foundation of distant miracles which cannot be verified, but on the broad and solid ground of the constant ministry of God to man in the order of the world. This is the plain and undeniable and evidential miracle: the miracle of progress, whereby God guides the race, as all the histories show; the

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miracle of providence, whereby God ministers every day, in His infinite wisdom and His love which passes understanding, to every one of us, answering our prayers ; the miracle of the fatherhood of God.



**THE SUPREME DISCLOSURE OF  
GOD**



## THE SUPREME DISCLOSURE OF GOD



THE elements of revelation and of miracle in religion meet in a supreme disclosure.

God has made Himself evident to us in the world of nature. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the changing seasons, the sun and rain, the seed-time and harvest, manifest the providence of God. But this is not an adequate disclosure of the divine. The great place of the miraculous in all religions testifies to the strong desire of man for clearer evidence. The order of the world is so impersonal, the years go on about their business with so little regard for our concerns, the just and the unjust are treated so alike, that the whole universe seems a vast machine, which may indeed bear witness to some mighty force, but which gives us no assurance of individual interest.

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What we want is a swift and certain interposition in our affairs, which shall settle all our doubts without a per-adventure. We want to see the lightning flash. The stars are symbols of wonder, and we look up at them as they shine out of the environing mystery of space; but they stay in their courses so serenely and everlastingingly that they do not give us any satisfaction. They make no response. If the sun should be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, if the stars should fall, then we might realize the relation between earth and heaven.

After all is said about the manifestation of God in common life, and the subordination of the old belief in miracle to the new belief in the divineness of the commonplace, we are not contented. There is a common feeling, which may be illogical but is certainly natural, that a world without a miracle is a world without convincing evidence of the personality of God. And that means that the disclosure of God in nature is not enough.

God has spoken unto us also in the

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world of humanity. The course of history declares the glory of God. Taking the life of man thus in the large, we see — as we can rarely see in our own experience or observation — that there is a guiding hand. On comes the race along the highway of the nations, led by providential powers, slowly learning the essential lessons, taught by pains which at the moment seemed sheer tragedy and cruelty, but which time interprets as the dealings of an infinite wisdom and affection. But this again, like the revelation of God in nature, fails to satisfy our longing for the assurance of a direct relation between God and our own life. It bears witness to a mighty God Who does indeed care for the race, but Who, so far as we can see, is too great to care for the individual. Sometimes, indeed, there seems to be a clear indication in our own experience which enables us to look out into the invisible and pray, "Our Father." But often such evidence is transitory and uncertain. Even in the large, the nature of God as He is revealed in humanity is

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hard to read. Is God law, or is He love?

Then, in the midst of the theological uncertainties and perplexities presented by nature and by humanity, come the voices of the prophets. The common experience of common people is interpreted by the uncommon experience of these uncommon people. As the mysteries of nature are lightened here and there by discovery, and the mysteries of humanity are lightened here and there by genius, so that we understand the world better and ourselves better, so God speaks to us with a new plainness by the prophets. These uncommon persons, delicately sensitive to spiritual impressions, see what we cannot see, and hear what we cannot hear. Where we doubt or guess, they perceive God.

But this perception of God is conditioned and limited by the minds and souls of the prophets. It is affected by their prejudices and ignorances. It is dulled by their sins. We acknowledge that they know more about God than we do, but we cannot help seeing

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that they are liable to error. As a matter of fact, they have erred, and must err. We desire, therefore, a perfect prophet, to whom, and in whom, the disclosure of the divine may be made in all possible fulness. Such a prophet must carry our human nature to its loftiest height. He must be our ideal of what man ought to be ; and this ideal must be in terms of character. He need not be the mightiest of men, nor even the wisest of men ; these qualities have been found to be consistent with baseness. He must be the best of men. Then shall he be able to look with clear sight into the invisible, and to hear the voice of God. And in the presence of his perfection we shall say, "Here is one who can tell us of God with a certainty which passes all our possibilities, and to whom we can go with humility and confidence for the supreme divine disclosure." In our search for the truth about God, in our endeavor to know the nature of God and the relation of God to our soul, our reasonable trust is in the perfect prophet.

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Not only is it true that such a prophet will know more of the divine than we may ever hope to know, but it is true that in such a prophet God will be able to make an adequate revelation of Himself. Not in nature, not in humanity, not even in the words of many prophets, shall God speak to us adequately, but in the teaching and still more in the life of the perfect prophet, who is both the symbol and the manifestation of the divine. Here, plainly, is the supreme disclosure of God. This perfect prophet, in whom is made this supreme disclosure, is Jesus Christ.

This statement is expressed in the careful language of theology in the doctrine of the Incarnation.

A good deal of confusion is cleared away from this doctrine by a consideration of the two-sidedness of truth. Truth has two sides, a nearer and a farther. Thus in the physical world, the nearer side of truth is what we call practical, and the farther side is what we call scientific or technical. We have a practical acquaintance with

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many things concerning which we are ignorant technically. We know enough about the law of gravitation to use it in our business, and we know enough about electricity to turn on the current which lights the lamps. But a scientific exposition of either of these matters not only exceeds the knowledge of the layman, but serves only to perplex him. The same distinction holds between religion and theology. Religion is the practical side of theology; theology is the scientific or technical side of religion. One is plain enough to the simplest mind; the other is plain only to those who are expert in metaphysics, — and it is not very plain even to them.

For in addition to this difference between the two sides of truth, whereby one side is practical and the other is technical, there is a further difference. The nearer side is that aspect of truth which we are able to understand, and which we can define in clear sentences; the farther side is that aspect of truth which reaches away into the infinite, beyond our understanding. These two

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sides are in all truth, even in the material world; the distinction is obvious in the world of the spirit. What we actually need, in faith as in knowledge, is a definite hold upon the nearer, practical side of truth; together with a clear perception that beyond this lie illimitable ranges of truth which exceed our common understanding.

The nearer side of the doctrine of the Incarnation is a recognition in Jesus Christ of the realization of two everlasting desires. One of these is the desire of man to know God, and to know him in some such way as we know our neighbors. The request of the apostles, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," expresses it. This craving for God in the concrete, which is characteristic of man in all ages, is strengthened at this moment by the giving up of the old thought of God as sitting remote upon a throne, and the taking on of the thought of God as pervading all our life. This present conception of God is no doubt truer than the old, but it greatly increases the difficulty of setting the personality

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of God before our minds. We reach out through all this divine environment, which likens God to the air and the light, for God Himself.

The other everlasting desire is that which we believe to be in God: the desire to reveal Himself, to meet with the touch of His hand our groping hands. This desire we believe to be in God, because it is in us. If He cares for us, as the prophets say, He must wish to make His nature and His will known to us; He must somehow satisfy this human craving for Himself in our image. And it is plain that this can best be done, not by a book, nor by a voice, but in the universal human language, the language of life. God must somehow enter into man; He must in some way act and speak, and be accessible to us as man.

These two desires meet in Jesus Christ, of whom the doctrine of the Incarnation declares that He is at the same time God and man.

And here our present thought of God as infinitely near rather than infinitely distant assists our 'imagination. For-

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merly, when God was believed to be sitting on a throne in heaven, we had to think of him as "coming down." Somehow, He came down and united Himself with human nature, and resided for a time upon this planet. That was very hard to think. To-day, the interpretative phrase, instead of "coming down," is "shining through."

God is in all the universal life, as the sun is in the world. At sundry times and in divers manners, He discloses Himself. He shines through nature, as the sun shines through a clouded glass, dimly. He shines through humanity, especially in the lives of good people, as the sun shines where the glass is clearer; still dimly, but more distinctly, we see God in them. But here is a clear place in the glass where the sun shines straight through. We look, and behold the sun! Not the sun in the perfection of his strength, because our eyes are not strong enough to see that; even the best telescopes are insufficient for that,— but still, the sun.

Thus shines God through Jesus

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Christ. He is a man; for we may touch His hands and hear His voice. His humanity makes Him our example; in Whom we perceive the possibilities of mankind at its best; Who thus calls us on to high achievement, and fills our souls with the inspiration of a splendid ideal. He is that concrete embodiment of the divine for which we long. And, at the same time, He is God; in Him we see God. When we would draw near to God, we draw near to Him. When we would understand, as best we may, the nature and the will of God, we learn of Him.

It is true that when we endeavor to distinguish between the human and the divine in Him, we fall easily into confusion. Are they indeed distinguishable? Is the divine spirit foreign to the human spirit? Is God, who made us in His own image, quite apart from us whom He has made? The moral qualities, which constitute the best of our humanity, must be the same in Him and in us; truth the same, righteousness the same, love the same. The human and the divine meet in

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Christ as the physical and the spiritual meet in every act and thought of man. Together they enter into the nature and the life of the one Christ. As we cannot discern which part is oxygen and which is hydrogen in the water which we drink, so we receive that living water to which He likened Himself, satisfied to be refreshed by it, without need of analysis.

It is true that when we endeavor to persuade our neighbor that not man only, but God, was in Christ, we find that we are out of the region of reasoning, in the region of recognition. We cannot prove it. Neither can we prove the splendor of the sky. There it is, shining in the eyes of all men. But the argument for it is not in the books of the astronomers, nor in the calculations of the observatories. It is its own argument. So the hero is his own argument; the saint is his own argument. The greatness of these men cannot be demonstrated to the satisfaction and conversion of the indifferent. They wait, not for reasoning, but for recognition. Jesus Christ, when

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He was visibly and audibly among us, waited often in vain. Men saw and heard Him, and then went by on the other side of the street. The supreme man of all time was in their town, but they did not know it. God was manifested among them, but they were not aware that anything was happening. Jesus Christ is seen to be the Son of God, not by comparison of texts, but by looking into His face.

This recognition exists, I suppose, in the souls of all good people who have come to the knowledge of Jesus. They may express themselves in other words than ours. They may be reluctant to recite our creeds. Under the stress of controversy they may express a difference which is much wider than they truly feel. Nevertheless, Jesus is the master of their soul, the revealer of eternal truth, the Son of God, whom they revere and serve and love, in whom they find the disclosure of the divine. Dr. Everett, in the notes of his lectures in the Harvard Divinity School, says : "The divine principle in the world manifests itself more and more

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till it comes to the full consciousness of itself in the life and teaching of Jesus. . . . His divinity is not that of one who has come down from above; it is that of the life in which the divine element that has been working in the world comes at last to its consummation, and reaches the point at which the doors open between the lower and the higher, so that the divine life flows freely downward and the human life upward, and the divine and human mingle." This may not satisfy all the requirements of the Nicene theology, but it touches the heart of the truth.

The essential conviction is that God, Who spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has spoken to us by his Son. "In the beginning was the Word," says the Fourth Gospel, "and the Word was God." Yes, we lift up our eyes to these high truths, which loom above the level of our sight. St. Paul puts it in an easier way. "God was in Christ," he says. That is the nearer side. God was in Christ. There are perplexities in plenty, and questions which we cannot answer.

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The divinity of Christ, like every other assertion which contains a divine factor, is beyond complete definition. If we could completely define and understand it, that would mean that the divine factor had been left out. But this is enough for our common reason and our common faith; enough for practical religion. God was in Christ. Here is our assurance in the midst of all confusion; the words which He spoke were not the conjectures of philosophy, but the certain words of life eternal. Here is our courage, our faith, our consolation, our strength, in the midst of difficulty: we know beyond all hesitation that God cares for us. God in Christ has made the supreme disclosure of Himself.

This new divine disclosure in the person and word of Jesus Christ made necessary a new definition of God.

There were at that time two definitions of the being of God. In most religions God was defined in terms of polytheism. There were many gods. The natural association of the idea of personality with the fact of motion led

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to the theory of an immediate divine cause for every phenomenon of life. There was a god of the sky and of the sea, a god of the wind and of the rain, and gods were resident in whispering trees and singing springs. Behind these many gods, the wisest men found God. They had a dim perception of one eternal and universal source of life and power.

This definition of God in terms of monotheism was made a popular belief in Judaism. It began, indeed, in the idea of one god for the land and for the nation, and it was only after a long time and with great difficulty that this tribal monotheism rose to the conception of one god over all the earth. In spite of the teachings of the prophets, even the Jewish creed for centuries was popularly expressed in the sentence of a psalm, which reads, "Among the gods there is none like unto Thee." The people believed that every nation had its god. The Jewish god was the Lord, Jehovah. Gradually, by the lessons of great tribulation, the Jewish people came to that faith in one

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supreme God which makes the Old Testament at its height preëminent over all the ancient theologies. When Christ came, they all believed in one only God.

The first theological difficulty which the Christian religion had to meet was presented by the idea of the divinity of Christ. The Christians had to explain Him to themselves and to their neighbors. An obvious and easy explanation was in terms of polytheism. Christ was an inferior god. Behind all life, the maker and maintainer of the universe, was the supreme God, the Father, and, coming to earth on His errand, to teach men the truth about Him, to get His will done on earth as it is done in heaven, was His Son.

This was the interpretation of Christ which was offered at the beginning of the fourth century by Arius. He held the divinity of Christ, but taught that it was a secondary and subordinate divinity. Thus the Christian religion, according to his doctrine, had two gods. It was the fear of polytheism which made the contention against

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Arianism so bitter. The Christians had their dwelling in a polytheistic world; all their neighbors, except the Jews, were of that way of thinking. And the Christians knew by observation and experience that polytheism was unsatisfactory both in theology and in morals. They were determined — the clear-sighted among them — not to go back to it.

But how could the divinity of Christ be reconciled, then, with monotheism? This was accomplished by the doctrine of the Trinity.

This doctrine begins with the statement of the unity of God, but it defines that unity not in terms of simplicity, but in terms of complexity. The natural symbol of simplicity is the number One. The natural symbol of complexity is the number Three, which is suggested to the mind by the beginning, the middle, and the end. Certain words of the Gospels, confirmed by the phenomena of the spiritual life, brought into Christian consciousness the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in Christian theology, the one God

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came to be known under three names, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

To the theologian, the three names represented three eternal distinctions in the divine nature. To the layman they represented three manifestations of God. The one God is given one or other of three names according as He deals with us in one or other of three ways. An excellent statement of this popular definition is that of the Church Catechism, where the child is taught to say, as a summary of the creed: "First, I learn to believe in God the Father, Who hath made me and all the world; secondly, in God the Son, Who hath redeemed me, and all mankind; thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, Who sanctifieth me, and all the people of God."

Thus when God is thought of as the creator of the world and man, the lord of the universe, the maintainer of the suns and stars, we are thinking of Him as the Father. When God is thought of as making known to man His will and His love in the revealing person-

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ality of Jesus Christ, we are thinking of Him as the Son. When God is thought of as speaking in the souls of all men, the world over, in the voice of inspiration which leads to all manner of progress, and in the voice of conscience which leads to all manner of righteousness, we are thinking of Him as the Spirit. There is one only God, in the world about us, in the world within us, and in Jesus Christ, Who interprets both.

**THE SUPREME REQUIREMENT  
OF RELIGION**



## THE SUPREME REQUIREMENT OF RELIGION



THE same sentence in which St. Paul states the supreme disclosure of God contains also a statement of the essential purpose of that disclosure. "God was in Christ," he says, "reconciling the world unto Himself."

The fundamental facts of religion, the being of God and the soul of man, meet in Jesus Christ, Who is the highest revelation and the greatest miracle. But the effect which is intended by His life and death is the reconciliation of man to God. This reconciliation has often been expressed in terms of a salvation in the future from the pain of punishment, but it is constantly expressed in the New Testament in terms of a salvation in the present from the habit of sin; that is, the supreme requirement of religion is character.

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The disclosure of God in Christ may be considered from the point of view of theology, or from the point of view of religion. The difference between theology and religion is like the difference between psychology and philanthropy. Psychology is a way of thinking, a study of human nature, an analysis of the human mind. Philanthropy is a way of living, a kindly feeling extending into kindly action for the benefit of society. So theology is a way of thinking ; the word itself expresses thought rather than action, a discourse concerning God. Theology concerns itself with the greatest and deepest of all themes, and the purpose of it is the knowledge of the truth ; while religion is a way of living, a carrying of the truth into common life, an assertion of faith by the practical evidence of works.

Neither of these distinctions — between psychology and philanthropy, or between theology and religion — may be accurately drawn. Neither the psychologist nor the theologian is content to be kept within the fences

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of philosophy. They are both concerned with life. The psychologist complains that his experiments and conclusions are taken with so little seriousness. "The laboratories for the study of the inner life flourish," he says; "experiments are made, inventions are tested, new vistas are opened, but practical life goes on without making any use of all these psychological discoveries. It is, indeed, as if the steam engine were confined to the laboratory table, while in the practical world work were still clumsily done by the arms of slaves." The theologian is protesting with the same vigor against being relegated to those regions which busy people with some contempt call "academic." His studies are for our use. Their right result is better religion.

In the New Testament, theology is always thus connected with ethics. The purpose of the discussion of it is to provide a solid foundation of conviction or encouragement on which to build a house of life. The epistles of St. Paul begin with considerations of

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faith, but they end with considerations of works. The statement, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," belongs indeed to history, but still more to theology. It has to do with that Supreme disclosure of God which we have been discussing. But the sentence goes straight on to a practical application: "teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." It proceeds from the supreme disclosure to the supreme requirement.

An ancient and common opinion, in the apostolic age, and long after, maintained that the most necessary part of religion is ritual. It was taught by the priests of most religions that what God most desires is the accurate performance of certain prescribed ceremonies. He must be approached with proper reverence. He must be offered the odor of incense and the fat of sacrifices. So long as the services are duly conducted, with the sound of music and the color of vestments, God, they said, is satisfied. It seems to us a

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curious and even grotesque idea of God, but of the existence of it there is no doubt. The Old Testament prophets met it, and contended against it, — not always with success.

The characteristic names by which Christians have called themselves in the East and in the West suggest two other theories as to the supreme religious requirement. One of these names, which is exalted in the East and is made a part of the title of the Eastern Church, is "orthodox." It expresses a right relation to the creed. It means that a man is to be considered a good Christian according to his acceptance of a certain formulation of Christian truth. The other name, which is exalted in the West, and is made a part of the title of the Western Church, is "catholic." This refers to order, as "orthodox" refers to faith. It is erected against schism, as "orthodox" is erected against heresy. It expresses a right relation to the church. It means that a man is to be considered a good Christian according to his loyalty to a certain organization of Christian life.

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These ideas as to the supreme requirement of religion are additions to the New Testament ideal. The creed was introduced into Christianity by the Greeks. It represents their racial instinct to get truth into clear form. Faith, in the New Testament, is for the most part emotional rather than intellectual. The faith which is made a condition of salvation is related not to a formula, but to a person. It consists in allegiance to Jesus Christ. It is the faith of a child in his parents. In the later books of the New Testament, we come upon faith as "the faith." This is the beginning of the making of a creed. But the creed is nowhere exalted in primitive Christianity as it came to be in the East.

The church was introduced into Christianity by the Romans. It was their characteristic racial contribution. Their instinct was to get life into order.

They had an executive, governmental gift. They found the New Testament Church so loosely organized that St. Paul gives two or three quite different lists of the names and duties of its

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officers. There was a church, in the sense of a fraternal organization, from the beginning; but the emphasis of interest was not upon it. That was a Roman emphasis, the gift of a people who, like the Greeks, brought their best and offered it to God.

The supreme requirement of religion is not the performance of a ritual, nor the recitation of a creed, nor allegiance to a church. It is the living of a good life. The supreme requisite is character.

This religious ideal the Christians inherited from the Jews. It was strikingly symbolized in the construction of the Jewish temple.

The temple was so planned as to lead the heart and mind of the worshipper along an ascending series of holy places. He entered first into a great enclosure, like the yard of a church, whose name—the Court of the Gentiles—indicated that there the sacred and the secular were intermingled. The world was indeed shut out, but only in part; the doors were open for all sorts of people. In this

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enclosure stood the temple itself, and at the Beautiful Gate which gave access to it, a process of sifting and selection began. Only the faithful had the privilege of entrance. Thus they came into the Court of the Women. Here the women stayed, while the men went on up a high range of steps to the Court of the Priests. And there the laymen stayed, while the priests went on into the Holy Place. And the priests themselves remained in the Holy Place, by the altar of incense, while the High Priest entered, on certain days, into the Holy of Holies. He lifted the veil which hung before the door, and went in to make his prayers for himself and for his people before the supreme symbol of the divine presence. That symbol was an ancient chest, the ark, stained and battered in the journeys and the wars of the old time; made, they said, by Moses, when he came down from Sinai. Nobody saw it but the High Priest, and he saw it only once a year. Its position at the end of this succession of increasing sanctities, and its

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mysterious seclusion, deepened the awe with which it was regarded by the people. In the ark were the tables of stone, written over with the Ten Commandments.

Thus at the summit of the Old Testament religion, in the most sacred place in the sanctuary of the Old Testament worship, higher than all the altars, the sign and assurance of the presence of God, was the statement of the moral law. When you got to the very heart of it, past all the sacrifices, through the smoke of incense, there was that symbol of the fact that the chief thing in true religion is character.

Of course, the creed is important, and the church is important.

The creed is the best statement which we are able to make concerning the relation of the being of God to the soul of man. The world of nature is a manifestation of God the Father. Jesus Christ, the flower of the world of humanity, is a manifestation of God the Son, living our life, dying for our sake, rising again to life everlasting, coming finally to judge us. The prog-

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ress of the world, and of every individual in it, is the work of God the Holy Ghost, whose voice is the voice of conscience, and who is the inspirer of all good accomplishment. This is what the creed says, bringing into its brief space the intuitions of the saints, and the conclusions of the sages.

But the essential purpose of the creed is practical. The orthodox intellectual acceptance of it has no religious value whatsoever. Jesus said, "The devils believe and tremble." They believe, so far as that goes, and tremble, too. But it makes no difference; it has no moral effect. The devils are orthodox, but they continue to be devils notwithstanding. An efficient faith is practical. It carries the articles of the creed into daily effect. Thus the creed is not only related to life, but is of value in proportion as it affects life. It is to be estimated by the pragmatic test. Some of its statements are of primary importance, others are of secondary importance, according to their working power. "I believe in God the Father," is of primary importance;

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"I believe that Christ descended into hell," is of secondary importance. Upon one of these beliefs everything depends; it is a cardinal truth of religion. Upon the other, nothing depends; it is but a detail,—true enough, but of little daily value. The importance of knowing the meaning of the world as it is set forth in the creed is that we may live in accordance with it. The creed is for the sake of character.

The church is the organization of the religious life as the creed is the formulation of religious truth. It is an association of Christians for the sake of service: for service considered devotionally, as we enter into the church for the good of our souls; and for service considered socially, as we go out of the church to undertake the good of others.

But this double use of the word "service" discloses the true purpose of the church. The two aspects of religion, devotional and social, belong together. Prayer and philanthropy are two sides of the same good life. Wor-

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ship and work are dependent the one upon the other, like the steam and the machine. They act and react. The sermons and sacraments of the church are privileges which carry responsibilities with them, and enable men to do the things for which they are responsible. It is all eventually practical, like the creed.

The true test of a church is not the glory of its buildings, nor the strength of its organization, nor its wealth nor numbers, but its actual result in character. Thus a parish is tested by the conduct of the congregation, and an individual by his ordinary behavior. What does our religion do for us? What does our church mean as represented by us among our neighbors? What are the virtues which our loyal churchmanship implies? These questions are vital, and what they signify is that the church, like the creed, is for the sake of character. It exists to make men good.

Accordingly, in Christ's description of the Last Judgment, there is no mention of either creed or church.

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Men are estimated there by what they are as the result of all the influences of their lives. One may say, "I kept the faith; I believed everything that was set down in the creeds, every least bit of it, and more beside." But the Lord will answer: "Very well, what good did it do you? How did it appear in your common conduct? That excellent faith should have made you honest, generous, considerate, fraternal. Are you of that character as the consequence of your creed?" Another may say, "I was devoted to the church; I entered unfailingly into all its rites and customs, and partook of all its sacraments; I was baptized and confirmed and came with uninterrupted regularity to the Holy Communion; I was a good churchman all my life." And the Lord will answer: "And were you also a good Christian? Did the sacraments of the church inspire you to self-sacrifice for the welfare of others? Were you more kind because you went to church, more watchful of opportunities to be of use, more restrained in your criticism of your

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neighbors, more conscious of the constant presence of God?"

Neither orthodoxy nor churchmanship shall avail anything when the Lord says, "I was anhungered, and ye gave me no meat." They will only aggravate the offence of our omissions. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord," He asks, "and do not the things which I say?" It all comes back to character. That is both supreme and essential. It is the real thing.

The debate between faith and works can never be decided by the formula "either, or." They are both necessary. The conflict between the epistles of St. Paul and the epistles of St. James is only on the surface. They are both right. The existence of the faith on which St. Paul insisted is shown by the good works which, as St. James said, are the fruit of it. And the significance of the works — whether they are done for the glory and love of God, or only for the praise of man — is measured by the faith which lies behind. For faith, as the vital

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part of works, is the spirit in which the works are done. In the order of progress, faith passes into works, as the seed passes into the life of the plant, and is made evident by the plant, and is for the sake of the plant.

Thus, in the transfiguration of Christ, the vision came first and then the task: first the revelation of the divine presence and blessing, then the conveyance of the blessing to meet the needs of men. The vision was for the sake of the task. Thus, Jesus said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." He enriched His own spirit, in order that thereby He might be of larger service to His disciples. It comes again to the same thing, — to the requirement of character as the supreme purpose of religion.

The question, What is essential in Christianity? is answered in two ways. Some say that the essential is the teaching of Christ; some say that the essential is the person of Christ. Those who emphasize the teaching quote the first three gospels, the narrative gospels, whose main interest is to tell us what

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Christ said and did. Those who emphasize the person quote the Fourth Gospel, the interpretative gospel, whose chief interest is to tell us what Christ was, and is, and whose intention is plainly stated in the words, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

Even so, the incarnation and the atonement are for the saving of men's souls. They are filled with moral meanings. They are bound up with conduct. Between these apparently rival interests, on one side in the teaching, on the other side in the person of Christ, there is no exclusive decision to be made. The teaching of Christ is living, appealing, and convincing by virtue of His personality behind it; much of it had been taught before; what He did was to make it real by speaking it and living it. And the person of Christ is interpreted by the teaching; the reverence which is claimed for Him is based on the disclosure of an ideal character.

When we ask, then, What does Christ desire of men to-day? What

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does He desire, in whom God and man meet, Who discloses the being of God and the soul of man and the true relation of the one to the other ? What is the supreme requirement of religion ? the answer is in His own words, again and again repeated. He desires that we may do the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. He did not come as a sage, gathering men about Him that He might reveal to them the mysteries of the unseen. His errand was wholly practical, altogether concerned with conduct. He scandalized the strict religionists of His time by His disregard for things ecclesiastical. For such things He cared nothing. It is characteristic of Him that He ministered not in Jerusalem, a place whose main concern was centred in the temple, but in Capernaum, a place whose main concern was centred in the fish-market. He found congenial followers, not among the priests, but among the men of business. The orthodox churchmen instinctively hated Him. They perceived truly that His success meant their ruin. His ideals and purposes

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were altogether different from theirs. He cared about conduct. He wanted to make men honest, and pure, and helpful, and thus to increase the happiness of life. He was crucified by a church which was intent on the advantage of its own organization, and had no care for the community. They crucified Him because He insisted on enforcing the importance of goodness. He died in defence of the proposition that true religion is essentially moral, and that the supreme requirement of religion is character.

**THE CHRISTIAN DEFINITION  
OF CHARACTER**



## THE CHRISTIAN DEFINITION OF CHARACTER



HE assertion that the supreme disclosure of God teaches that character is the supreme requirement of religion is not the whole of the truth. As much was declared before that disclosure was made. The importance of righteousness is the constant message of the Old Testament. The great words, "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God," are very ancient words. They might have been inscribed over the entrance into that temple whose Holy of Holies enshrined the proclamation of the moral law. The prophets were teachers of righteousness. The heart of the Bible religion, long before Christ came, was a good life.

When He came, He added something. He brought a new note into conduct,

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raised a new standard of behavior, introduced a new definition of character.

This is evident in the criticisms which He made upon the ethical ideals of His time. When He told His disciples that except their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven, He implied thereby not only that these teachers were failing to observe their own best principles, but that He had new principles in mind.

And this is confirmed by the astonishment with which they received His ethical teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

One reason for their surprise was the manner of His speech. "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." He spoke, that is, with a directness to which they were not accustomed. His words had a new tone of personal conviction, and were enforced by the use of a new pronoun. He said *I*. And this He said not only as one who speaks naturally, after the

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fashion of earnest conversation, saying "I" as we all do when we talk one with another, but as one who speaks originally, declaring His own thought in contrast with those who are only quoting other people's thoughts. "You have heard," He said, "what the fathers have taught, you know what was said by them of old time, but I say unto you" — something different from that, and better.

This was the first reason for the popular astonishment. The people were accustomed to the manner of the scribes. These men, as the name indicates, were copyists. Their business was to write and rewrite not their own ideas, nor their independent conclusions or convictions, but the words of wise men of former generations. They had no intention to contribute anything to the religion of their day. They had no criticism upon the past in the light of new experience, new reflection, new instruction from God. They were concerned only to repeat what they had been taught, and to get their disciples to repeat it accurately, in their turn.

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Their teaching was all from the textbook, at second hand, a series of quotations. Their characteristic formula was, "It is written." Thus when Jesus came, speaking His own mind, declaring His own position, differing without hesitation from accepted doctrines, quoting from nobo y, proclaiming new ideas, His hearers were astonished at His teaching. Of course they were astonished. In all their respectable lives, they had r ever heard anybody speak like that.

But there was another reason for their surprise. They were amazed not only at the manner, but at the matter of His speech. They were astonished at the things which He said. His doctrine was not only new, but revolutionary. The changes which He proposed were not only, nor chiefly, in the field of belief, but in the field of conduct. A new creed may come to the minds of men as a strange thing, to be accepted or rejected, and they may debate it eagerly, for and against, but there is at first a certain remoteness and even unreality about it. Not

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for a long time does it appeal to people in general as related immediately to their own lives. That is not so of a new commandment. The creed may seem of the nature of theory, but the commandment brings matters out of the world of thought into the world of action. It is something to be done. It demands decision. It calls for obedience or for disobedience. Christ proclaimed a new commandment, a new ideal of conduct, a new test of the excellence of life, a new definition of character.

It is to the Sermon on the Mount that we are to go to learn what this new definition of character is.

The beginning of that sermon defines character in terms of aspiration. Its first words are the beatitudes of incompleteness: blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.

These words are intended to develop the virtue of discontent. They praise those who are discontented not so much with their lot in life as with themselves.

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It is only in the spirit of such discontent that one desires to be different. And that desire is the beginning of all betterment. The people among whom Jesus could do nothing were those contented persons who had ceased to be receptive because they had become satisfied. At that point, they stopped growing. St. Paul had the same experience at Athens. He failed in the university city, as his Master had failed in the cathedral town. The people there were intellectually contented; they had stopped learning. Blessed, says Christ, are they who perceive their needs, and are aware of their negligences and ignorances, and desire to be better.

This quality of aspiration is made a permanent part of the definition of character by the exaltation of ideals.

Thus the beatitudes differ from the commandments. The commandments are negative: most of them begin with the formula, "Thou shalt not." The beatitudes are positive: "This do, and thou shalt live." Both of these ways of dealing with conduct are neces-

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sary. We cannot get along with policemen only, or with preachers only. Some persons are amenable only to prohibition, put in strong terms and enforced by penalties. Others are persuaded by reason, by the plain presentation of the thing that is right. But these different people belong evidently in different classes, and represent different stages of moral progress. Thus childhood is a time for imperatives; the chief virtue is an unquestioning obedience. The same rule holds with uneducated and undeveloped races and individuals. They must live under regulation. They must be explicitly directed. Thus the commandments precede the beatitudes not only in the order of time, but in the order of progress. As men grow wiser and better, they pass out of the stage of the commandments into the stage of the beatitudes.

The beatitudes are ideals. Even if the formula, "Thou shalt not," were changed, and the decalogue was made to command a series of positive virtues, even then these rules would not be on

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a moral equality with the beatitudes. For the commandments, however phrased, are laws; and it is of the nature of law to be effective from without. It is imposed and enforced by authority. The beatitudes are ideals. They wait not for any authority, but appeal to the honest and free desire of the soul.

What we wish to do in school and in the larger world of business and society is to bring youth out of the range of laws into the range of ideals. The perfection of discipline and the success of religion are attained when such a state of mind is secured that the right thing will be done simply because it is right. All the people will then desire that which the best people desire, and will seek not to evade but to enforce it, beginning with themselves. Then the lawyers whose business it is to find how much injustice a client may commit without being in peril of a prison will be without employment.

Character is defined in the commandments as a goodness which consists in obedience to the laws. But

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this is an inferior goodness, not only because it depends on the enforcement of the laws, but because it extends only to speech and action, not to thought and motive. Character is defined in the beatitudes as a goodness which consists in the endeavor to attain ideals. It is independent of all laws; never asks, What does the law say? never asks, What must I do? It is a glad following of splendid examples. It is a joyous exercise of high principles. It is far removed from what is called "eye-service," being in the constant sight of God. St. Paul was always talking about the bondage of the law, and rebuking people for living under the law. He did not wish them to break the law. What he wanted was a Christian goodness which is good without formal obligation, from the sincere desire of a good heart.

The courts and the churches represent these two kinds of appeal to the consciences of men: the appeal of authority, and the appeal of the ideal. The mission of the church in the making of character is to bring into the

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hearts of people new desires, and to help them to bring the new desires to good effect. Thus at the heart of the ethical teaching of the Christian religion is neither a commandment nor a beatitude, but a Person in Whom all the commandments and beatitudes are realized, the ~~sent~~ of Whom gives us our supreme ~~sal~~ and encourages us to follow it. To be like Him is the complete definition of Christian character.

A study of the beatitudes dispels the common illusion that they praise only the passive virtues. The commandments, it is said, have in mind the active life; the beatitudes, the passive life. The inference is that the commandments are fitted for robust natures, while the beatitudes have their proper place in the lives of quiet people, who are neither very prosperous nor very well. But the beatitudes will not bear that construction.

It is true that they set forth ideals which may be attained without physical strength. They open the door of religion, and of eminent spiritual achieve-

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ment, to women; and are thereby the expression of a notable difference between Christianity and most other religions. Religion is commonly accounted an affair for men. Only in the Christian church are women made welcome and received as equals.

It is true that the beatitudes set forth ideals which may be attained without material prosperity. The blessing of God which is independent of strength of arm is independent also of weight of purse. Christianity is a poor man's religion, and has had a welcome for the poor, since the day when its Founder came out of a carpenter shop.

In both of these respects, the beatitudes present a new idea of greatness. A most important factor in the life of any people is their ideal of greatness, because that is the goal which the youth of the people will desire to attain. They will surely direct their energies that way. It is of mighty importance what sort of standard of success is commonly accepted. Is the supreme hero the successful soldier? Is he the

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successful merchant? Blessed is the people whose chief hero is a saint, whose eminence consists in character, whose integrity, and courage, and purity, and service, and self-sacrifice are the glory of the nation.

But the saint, as he is depicted in the beatitudes, is by no means a passive person. The beatitudes are by no means in praise of quiet virtues only, belonging to the cloister and the sheltered life.

Three times the Lord blesses discontent, the most revolutionary and dynamic of the virtues: when He praises the poor, the sad, and the hungry, and promises that they shall be satisfied presently. All revolt against injustice, all social change, all reformations, march under these sentences.

Twice He blesses service. Blessed are the merciful, who are engaged in the abolition of pain. It means physicians, who are contending with disease, and reformers, who are fighting the battles of the weak against the selfishness and cruelty of the strong. And

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blessed are the peacemakers, who are engaged in the abolition of hate. It means lawyers, who are enlisted against injustice, and statesmen, who are trying to put an end to the belated barbarism of war, and to get the nations to settle their differences like civilized citizens.

Once He blesses sincerity, when He praises the pure in heart. These are they who are without hypocrisy, and who speak the truth. They are not passive persons. Emerson said, "He who habitually speaks the truth will find himself in situations sufficiently dramatic." To be faithful to one's own convictions, to be loyal to one's own ideals; under difficulty, in the midst of adverse circumstances, in a minority, to speak the truth, — everybody in business, everybody in society, knows by experience — and most of us by sad experience — how hard that is.

Once He blesses constancy, when He praises those who are persecuted. They would not be persecuted if they were willing to submit. Passive persons rarely feel the hand of persecution. It is the constant, the unyielding, the

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people who persist and go on undaunted and unchanged, who are persecuted. The purpose of persecution is to make men change their minds, or, at least, to make them say that they have changed their minds. The purpose of persecution is to make men stop the thing which they are doing. They who are praised in the beatitudes will not stop. They defy persecution.

Once, indeed, He blesses meekness. And here, it seems, is a virtue which is plainly passive. Is not meekness synonymous with passivity? Does it not consist in quietness, and silence, and folded hands, and downcast eyes? Is it not a feminine grace, wholly different from masculine strength? Chaucer has glorified it in the person of patient Griselda, who suffers all manner of domestic tyranny without retaliation or reply, smiling the difficult smile of duty. Does it not consist in the prudent quality of having no opinion of one's own?

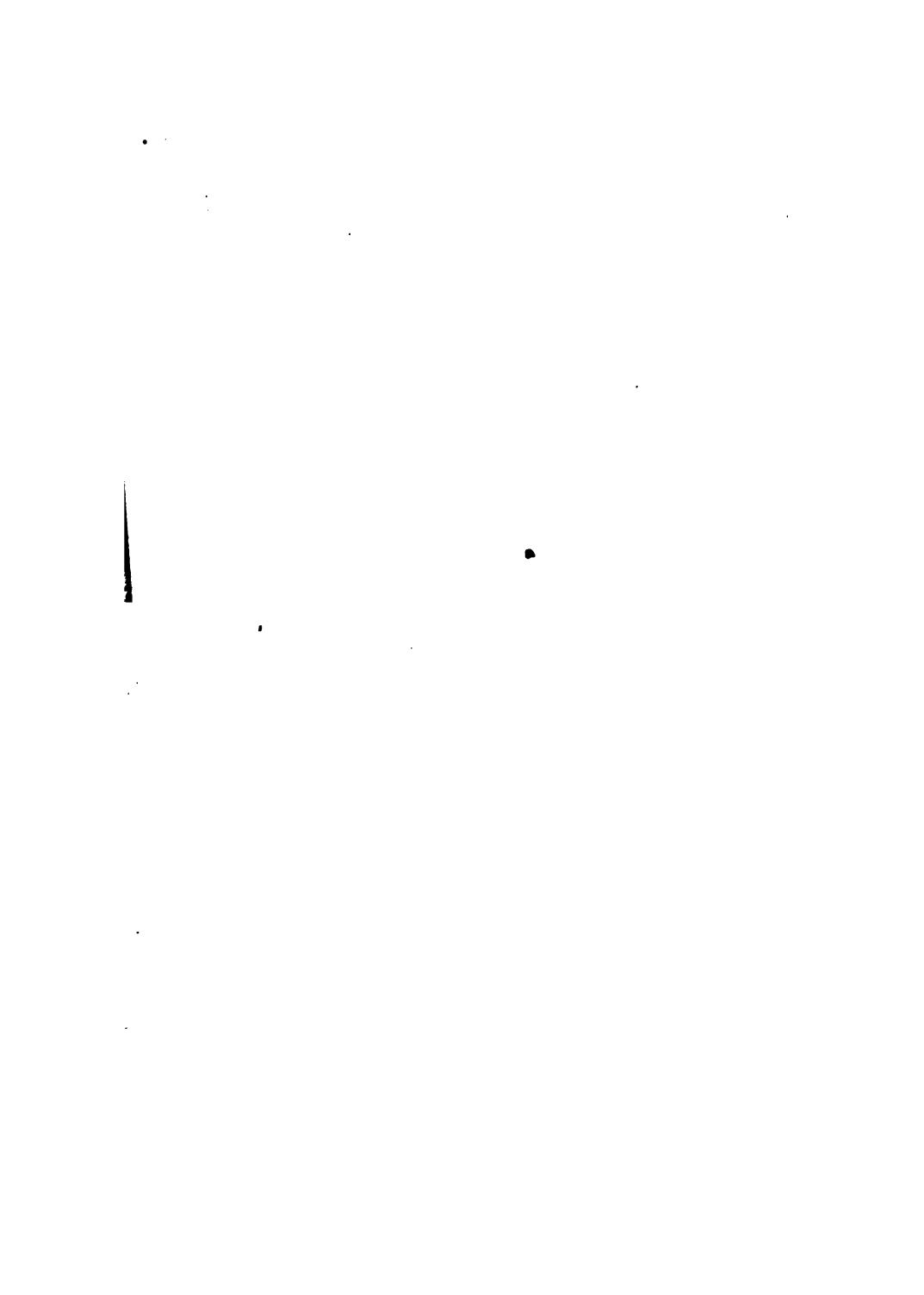
Not according to the examples of it in the Bible; where the meekest man in the Old Testament is Moses, and

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the meekest man in the New Testament is Jesus Christ. These examples compel a new definition of meekness ; or, rather, they send us back to the meaning of the word which was in the minds of the makers of the English Bible. They made meekness synonymous with unselfishness. It signified a subordination of self, indeed, but not in indolence, still less in cowardice. The meek man sought not his own advantage, but, at the same time and in the same spirit, he sought the good of his neighbor or of the whole community of neighbors. He asserted not his own rights, but the common rights, and to maintain them he contended mightily. Thus Thomas Malory called Sir Launcelot the meekest of knights. The adjective was too good for the hero, but the use of it shows how naturally it goes with fighting habits. The most dangerous enemy of public wrong is a meek man. When he appears, dishonest politicians tremble. Asking nothing for himself, he is invulnerable to threats and bribes alike. His is the most militant of virtues.



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THE Christian definition of character which is set forth in the Sermon on the Mount in terms of aspiration is further declared in that disclosure in terms of motive and in terms of service.

The presentation of character, not as a matter of obligation, to be enjoined in laws and enforced by courts, but as a matter of aspiration, to be desired and endeavored after, prepares the way for the statement that the heart of character is not an act, but a motive.

To inspire men to right living, instead of compelling them, is to introduce into ethics a new method; but to teach that obedience to the law consists not in action only, but in motive, is to introduce a new meaning. Character thus interpreted is a matter first of being, then of doing. The initial and essential part of it is what we are.

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Even what we desire to be, though we fail to attain it, — even that, as Browning says, counts to our good. The necessary thing is the quality of life. It may result in great achievement; it may result in failure. That depends, in great part, on the circumstances. Sometimes it is easy to be good, — in some surroundings, under restraining and assisting influences, — sometimes it is tremendously difficult. In the parable of the talents, the man who made his five talents earn five, and the man who made his two talents earn two, are rewarded alike. They get the same blessing, in the same words. The man with the one talent is reprobated not because he failed to make it five or two, or even one, but because he did not even try to make it anything. The blame which was visited upon him was not for lack of gain, but for lack of character.

Accordingly, Jesus took the commandments in which the obligations of character are expressed, and gave them a new and surprising interpretation.

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The law, "Thou shalt not kill," forbids, He says, all unfraternal thought. The murderer breaks it, but so does the man who is angry with his brother. He transgresses the commandment who cries, "Thou fool," and curses his brother and strikes him; but so also does he who only says, "Thou fool," under his breath, and does not lift his hand. The offence is in the spirit, in the motive.

The law, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," forbids, Christ says, all impure desires. It lays its hand, indeed, on the man who steals his neighbor's wife, but also on the man who accomplishes that primitive kind of plunder by the processes of law. He is divorced by the courts, and she is divorced by the courts, and thus they marry. It is a longer method, but also a safer one, than the old savage fashion of beating the husband with a club and carrying off the wife on horseback, but it is essentially the same thing. It may not involve a definite act of adultery; that may not precede, but follow, the divorce. But that is only a detail.

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And not only is he an adulterer who, in any manner, however prudent, steals his neighbor's wife, but he is also a member of that unclean and poisonous company who desires to do it, and would if he dared, but dares not. He is a coward as well as an adulterer. And with him belong all readers of sensual books, and all frequenters of sensual plays, and all admirers of sensual pictures, and all thinkers of sensual thoughts ; no matter how decent they appear. The rottenness is in the mind and heart. It is in the motive. And that determines the true quality of character.

Nothing so searching and disconcerting was ever said.

It is dimly illustrated by that recent change in public opinion and in the enforcement of the law, whereby men were sent to prison for conducting their business according to methods which, up to that time, had been commonly considered proper. Anyhow, proper or not, they were in common use, and the fact constituted a general standard by which they were permitted.

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Excellent men were aghast to find themselves suddenly exposed to execration. The scribes and Pharisees had the same feeling.

The new definition of character exposed the sins of the respectable. It made ridiculous the men who said, "All these commandments have I kept from my youth up." According to this emphasis on motive as the decisive element in conduct, all men are sinners, every one. The very saints are sinners.

Indeed, one of the differences between saints and sinners is that the saints know that they are sinners, while the sinners do not know, or do not care. It is in religion as in philosophy. The wise man, as Socrates contended, is he who is aware of his own ignorance; the ignorant man is of the opinion that he knows all that is worth knowing. Socrates was put to death because he made it his business to show that the sages of Athens were not so wise as they looked. Jesus was put to death because He made it His business to show that the saints of Jerusalem were

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not so good as they seemed. The effect of Christ's teaching was to change the field of ethics from the street to the heart. He disclosed a whole new series of sins. A great company of eminently respectable and self-satisfied persons were declared to be under the condemnation of God.

This interpretation of the commandments was extended to the customs, which were characteristic of the current religion. Christ took three of them, — almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, — and showed that not one of them has any value in itself. One may keep these customs, and all others, carefully and diligently, and yet not be in any true sense religious, or even righteous. One may give alms and fast and pray without being good. The combination has been effected innumerable times.

The significance of these things depends upon their motive. When alms are given to the accompaniment of trumpets, so that everybody may know who gives, and how much; when prayers are said in public, on the

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corners of the streets ; when they who fast put on a sad face, and dress themselves in penitential clothes,—the inference is that these devout acts are done for popular effect, to attract attention, and to gain applause. They get it, Jesus said ; but that is all they get. As for the favor of God, they made no endeavor after that. He values the words and deeds of men according to their sincere intention. The principle, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," applies here as in all life. The idea that one who sows the seeds whose harvest is only the praise of men may expect also the praise of God, is like the idea that thistle seeds may grow presently into grape-vines. They are rewarded of God who seek for His reward.

Give your alms in secret, Jesus said. When you pray, go into your own room and shut the door behind you. When you fast, wash your face and be of a cheerful countenance, and say nothing about fasting.

It was in accordance with this perspective, whereby the quality and im-

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portance of the act are determined by the motive, and men are judged not only by what they say and do, but by what they are, that Jesus amazed His contemporaries by His severity on the one side toward those who were accounted saints, and His kindness on the other side toward those who were accounted sinners. He was very considerate of the sinners of the street, but very hard upon the sinners of the church.

This was in part because the church sinners were so self-satisfied that only the unexpected thrust of a hard word would arouse them; but also because they were actually, in His judgment, the worse of the two. There was some hope for common sinners: often, they knew their ill condition and were sorry for it; often, they had fallen into sin under the impulse of some sudden, overwhelming temptation. But the respectable sinners were hypocrites. Their serene faces, their good words, their public charities, their devout attendance at religious services, aggravated their offences. The sight of

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their superficial respectability filled the soul of Jesus with indignation.

A man in the heat of passion kills his neighbor; another man in the coldness of selfish calculation cuts down his neighbor's wages, steals his business, robs him, ruins him. They are both of them murderers together; but the respectable, church-going murderer gets the worse blame of God. The man who sells liquor over the bar, and sees with his own eyes the working of the poison in the corruption of human life, is bad enough; but the esteemed citizen who owns the business is worse, according to the Christian definition. Between the prostitute and the politician who profits by her trade, there is no difference; except that which says to the prostitute, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more"; and to the politician, "Ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell."

The statement that the heart of character is not an act, but a motive, leads to a definition of motive in terms of social service.

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The great thing, indeed, is to please not men, but God ; but God is pleased by the service of humanity. Thus Christ not only interpreted the old commandments in a new way, but He added a new commandment. This commandment, as stated in the Golden Rule, had been taught before. Confucius had expressed it in a negative form, advising his disciples not to do that which they would not like to have others do to them. The formula, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," was a deduction from the Jewish law. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," was but another expression of it.

Even in theory, however, as Christ said, the Jewish rule interpreted the word "neighbor" as remotely different from the word "enemy." "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," the men of old time said, "but hate thine enemy." The parable of the Good Samaritan defined a neighbor as any one, of any nation or condition, who is in need of help. But the new teaching did not

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stop there. "I say unto you, Love your enemies." And this strong saying was explained and applied in the sentence which is called the new commandment. "A new commandment give I unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you that ye also love one another." In this sentence, the Christian definition of character is completed. Character consists in aspiration, whereby we desire to be better; it consists in motive, whereby all our goodness is estimated according to its meaning in the sight of Him who knows the heart of man; and aspiration and motive meet in service, whereby we advance the kingdom of heaven by increasing the common stock of happiness, according to the ideal set by Jesus Christ Himself.

Thus, on the Day of Pentecost, at the beginning of Christianity as an organized religion, the apostles came down out of the upper room into the street. That was their immediate impulse. In the upper room, the pentecostal wind was blowing and the

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pentecostal flames were blazing, but the apostles could not stay. The place was filled with benediction, and the symbols of the wind and fire were assurances of the divine presence; but the apostles were eager to share the benediction with others, and, as for the divine presence, they perceived that that was to be found in the street also. They betook themselves instinctively to the work of social service. The nearness of God impelled them to get near to men.

The particular instructions of Jesus, by which He applied the Sermon on the Mount to social service, have been criticised on the ground that they cannot be obeyed. Nobody, it is said, can do these things under the conditions of human nature. And if they could be done, the result would be more harm than good. Thus the counsel, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away," would destroy all efficient charity, make an army of idle paupers, and put an end to all reasonable financial business.

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No wise man will give to all askers, or lend to all borrowers. The same holds true against the counsel, "Take no thought for the morrow," though here this explanation that the word means "take no anxious thought" mitigates a little the seeming abandonment of prudence. So with the advice to give our cloak to everybody who by violence takes our coat, and to turn the other cheek to him who strikes us, and, in general, to love our enemies.

It may be said, in reply to these criticisms, that Christ knew very well that human nature would not be misled by His strong words. He knew that men would make for themselves all the necessary abatements. He was setting Himself, at the moment, against a selfishness which is as old as time and as universal as the race of man. He was fighting it, and striking the blows which belong to battles. The idea that His words are to be read as if He were quietly discussing the principles of a utilitarian philosophy, is wholly remote from the situation. His method was to stir His hearers into attention by

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putting His truth in such a way as to amaze them.

Also, in a time when nobody was making a written record and publishing it, He got His words remembered. His hearers could not forget what He said. He was intent on the immediate effect. At other times, He supplied some needed counterbalance.

It is true that He told one man to sell his goods and give the money to the poor, but He gave no such advice to other rich persons whom He knew. The parable of the talents praises the industry which succeeds in business. It is true that St. Paul, when he was struck on one cheek, and, instead of turning the other, flamed out, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," immediately apologized; but Jesus Himself did not turn the other cheek; when He was struck, He said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou me?"

Nevertheless, the words as they stand in the Sermon express a certain self-forgetting recklessness which is char-

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acteristic of Christian heroism. However remote from the ordinary pursuit of business and the common conduct of life, they have supplied, and will again supply, the watchwords of revolutions and crises and great social movements. It is in the spirit of the literal words that martyrs and confessors have behaved themselves. Francis of Assisi, taking these counsels without mitigation, changed the life of Europe. It illustrates their fighting value. They may hang on the wall in times of peace, and gather dust and rust, but the times come when they must be taken down and used.

Meanwhile, the social meaning of Christianity is plain and constant. It is true that God and one man are enough for most religions, but that it takes God and two men to make the Christian religion possible. The distinctive Christian virtues are social virtues. He who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, is against selfishness. He went about doing good, for our example. He was occupied, without rest, in the difficult

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endeavor to make men brotherly. The true saint, as He both taught and practised, is not a solitary person saying his prayers, but a strong and cheerful and effective participant in the life of society, occupied in good works. When He described the Day of Judgment, and thus set forth the essential quality of acceptable living, He made the single test of life to consist in social service. They who are blessed of God have served Him by serving their fellow-men. They who have omitted such service have no equivalent virtues or attainments. They may not plead the excellence of their private life, their honesty, truth, purity, their individual merits. These are admirable, but they are not sufficient. The sole determining question is, "What have you done for the good of others?"

## **RELIGION AND THE WORLD**



## RELIGION AND THE WORLD



THE practice of religion, interpreted in terms of aspiration, of motive, and of service, involves in detail a certain relation to the world, the flesh, and the devil. It implies, in the words of an ancient formulary, a renunciation of "the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh."

In the Old Testament, the man of religion is commonly a man of the world: of the world, in the good meaning of the phrase. He is a leader of men, and a founder of institutions, like Moses. He is a soldier and a commander of armies, like Joshua. He is a king-maker, like Samuel; or a king, like Solomon. Sometimes, indeed, he cries, with the writer of Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"; but this is in his old age, when he has

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discovered the emptiness of a worldly life by long and intimate experience.

It is true that some of the prophets were enemies of the established order, fomenters of revolution, like Elijah and Elisha, suggesting the assassination of kings. They reviled the church, like Amos. They stood among the peasants, like Micah, and assailed the wealth and luxury of cities. Others, however, like Isaiah, were themselves a part of the established order, gentlemen and courtiers, men of religion, but men of the world, also.

In the New Testament, the man of religion is so separate from the world that he accounts the world irreligious. He has no share in politics, and takes no interest in the affairs of government. He is not in society. He has no money. He finds it easy to recite beneath his breath the malediction of St. James: "Go to, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries which shall come upon you"; because he has no friends who are included in that condemnation.

It is true that one of the apostles, St. Matthew, held a government office;

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but he resigned it. Barnabas owned property in Cyprus, but he sold it and gave away the money. That, indeed, was a condition — though not a universal condition — of discipleship. Nicodemus was ready to be a disciple, if he might continue to be a senator; but Jesus would not receive him on those terms. The difficulty, indeed, was not so much about the senatorship, as about the desire of Nicodemus to keep his allegiance secret; but the requirement of complete loyalty to Christ seemed to make other interests impertinent and hostile.

The rich young ruler who said, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" was told to sell all that he had and give to the poor. This was an individual requirement, prescribed for the conditions of a particular case. There is no sign of such a doctrine in the parable of the talents. There the men are praised who were diligent and successful in their business. The words, "the mammon of unrighteousness," seem to refer to money, but this has its good

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uses. It is only the love of money, as is said later in the New Testament, which is the root of all evil.

Nevertheless, behind these instances, there was an insistence on a renunciation which seemed to include the good with the bad. The world, in the New Testament, seems to mean the ordinary occupations and pleasures of men. Whatever is not of religion, whatever is not immediately connected with prayer and praise, and with the concerns of the soul, is of the world. St. Paul's earliest epistles, to the Thessalonians, were written to men who for the sake of religion were giving up their work. They were abandoning the interests of this present life, and looking up expectantly to heaven. St. Paul gave them good advice, and sent them back to their shops and markets; but the incident illustrates the ease with which the early Christians separated themselves from the duties of the world.

The difference between the two Testaments is probably due in part to the increasing wickedness of the world.

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The world of Solomon was bad enough, but its evil was simple and unsophisticated compared with the world of Cæsar. The opening chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is so frank in its disclosure of the corruption of the Roman world that it is unfit to be read in church. The doctrines of original sin and total depravity were reasonable inferences from the social situation. The only right and safe procedure for a Christian seemed to be to keep away from the wicked world.

The different definitions of worldliness in the two Testaments are due also to a change in the political and social condition.

The New Testament people had lost their political independence, and their political responsibility had perished with it. They were in subjection. They could do nothing. Had St. Paul followed the example of Isaiah, we should never have known of his existence. He would have died suddenly, after his first speech. See how the radical and revolutionary boldness with which he confronted the contemporary

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church passes into prudent compli-  
ance when he confronts the contem-  
porary state. "Honor the king!" he  
says. The king at that moment being  
Nero, the counsel was a difficult one to  
follow; but it was necessary, in the  
circumstances. One can hardly carry on  
two successful revolutions at the same  
time, and Paul, most wisely, addressed  
himself to the revolution in religion.

It was evidently easy, however, to  
confuse the good with the bad in the  
condemnation of the world. The bad  
world was rich; riches, then, were  
worldly possessions, and only poverty  
was truly righteous. The bad world  
amused itself in the theatre and the  
amphitheatre; and the things in which  
it delighted in those places undeniably  
affected the soul like a disease; there-  
fore all amusements were of the world  
worldly. The bad world sat on all  
thrones, administered all the laws,  
collected all the taxes, and governed  
the nations; all that, then, was of the  
world.

A third reason for the difference  
between the Old Testament identifica-

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tion with the world and the New Testament separation from the world was the New Testament conviction that the days of the world are numbered.

Not only was the world bad, and not only did the badness of the world taint all its interests and actions, but the whole world, bad and good, and all the innocent concerns of life, were near their inevitable end. To-morrow morning, when the cock crows, the sound may loose the solid foundations of the sky, and the stars may fall, and the Son of Man may come. The sense of emergency which pervades Christ's doctrine of renunciation, calling men, as in the crisis of a war, to leave all and follow Him, became a dramatic and universal fact in the light of this expectation of the end of the world. The ties which hold the ordinary life together lose their importance at the approach of such a culmination and winding up of all human affairs. Some, at least, of the counsels of the New Testament are to be read as applicable rather to such a situation than to the common course of human life.

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In the midst of these confused judgments as to what is worldly and what is not, and as to the limits of the renunciation of the world, appears the great figure of Jesus Christ. His precept is contained in His desire for His disciples, not that they may be taken out of the world, but that they may be kept from the evil of it. And this He confirms by His example. In a time when the religious life was lived as by machinery, in a complication and tangle of regulation and prohibition, He lived freely and naturally. He entered with frank human pleasure into the festivities of the society about Him, till His enemies called Him "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber." He associated freely with all sorts of people, so that He was called, in bitter criticism, "a friend of publicans and sinners."

At the same time, being in the world, He was not of it. By His association with the rich and poor alike, and His frank entrance into all sorts of society, He asserted that worldliness is not necessarily a matter of circumstances or of occupation. It is not determined

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by riches or by poverty. It is a state of mind, a spiritual attitude, a certain emphasis of interest, a valuation of things. It consists, as St. John said, in loving the world. When an excited person announced to Emerson that the world was coming to an end, Emerson answered, "I can get along very well without it." The worldly person cannot get along without it. His life is wholly concerned with material and temporary matters. He is so intent on social pleasure, so dependent on the conveniences of the world, so occupied with the amusements of the world, that he loses all sense of the serious aspects of living. Or he is so taken up with the plans and transactions of his business or his profession, that his eyes are always on the ground, and he loses consciousness of a vastly larger side of life which is represented by ideals, by conscience, by the soul, and by the presence of God.

The unworldly person does not separate himself from either the business or the pleasure of the world, but he keeps all this in true perspective,

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maintains the right proportions of importance, and puts first things first. His citizenship is here where he lives and votes, but it is in heaven also; and the higher citizenship rules the lower. He knows that the world passes away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. That is his purpose, by doing the divine will to live the abiding life.

Whoever has this purpose, to whom the will of God is the supreme and determining consideration, has renounced the world. No matter where he is, nor what he does for a living, nor how he spends his time, whether he is rich or poor, in society or out of it, he has escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust. For lust means the desire of the world, the satisfaction of the senses, the adequacy of things material. It means the love of the world. They are unworldly who set their affection on things above, not on things on the earth, remembering that that which is seen is temporal, but that which is unseen is eternal.

As for the pleasures of the world, the

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attitude of religious people has often been curiously illustrated by the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son. "As he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing, and he was angry and would not go in."

It is a mighty serious world, they say, with a great amount of sin in it, and much sickness and pain and poverty; and it ends, so far as the individual is concerned, in certain death; and after death, the judgment. Little children laugh and play because they are ignorant of the ills which beset our path; but they who have come to years of discretion ought to know better. This perilous planet, on whose uncertain surface we live our brief lives, is not a place for levity. Diversion, as the word indicates, is that which diverts us from the straight course of sober thinking. But we ought not to allow anything to divert us. Under condemnation for our sins, under sentence of death, in imminent danger of hell, we ought to consider our condition, we ought to occupy our minds with sober thoughts, and to conduct our

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bodies in accord. "If any be merry, let him sing psalms!"

This feeling is so strong that many regard it as one of the universal and eternal facts. It is so evidently a part of our own history that it seems a part of general history, true always and everywhere. But this is not the case. Of course, religion has always been the opponent of vicious pleasures. And there have been times, as for example in the days when the church was contending with the Roman Empire, when all the pleasures of the world seemed to be corrupt and corrupting. But the alliance of religion with the soberieties of life alone, the dissociation of the church from the natural joys of society, the clothing of the saints in black and white, leaving all the pleasant garments for the sinners, — this is a modern and local situation.

For instance, in the Middle Ages, not only was the church the patron of the theatre, but the performance of plays proceeded under the church roof. The Passion Play at Oberammergau is a survival of a time when

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religion was freely given dramatic expression. The mediæval church was the mistress of all the pleasant arts. Music and painting were developed under her approval. The fasts and festivals of the Christian year, with processions through the streets, and manifold appeals to ear and eye, continually enriched the common life. The church was a vital part of society, entering into all human interests, the condition and background of all living, like the sky. And though, like the sky, it was sometimes dull and gray, this was not for long. It was varied and bright and shining, and gave a celestial color to the days. The bells were always ringing in the steeples, and the sound was a cheerful undertone beneath the noises of the street. The mediæval church may be criticised for lack of moral strictness. It was too easily contented. But it had the virtue of adding immeasurably to the interest and to the happiness of life.

Then, in Germany and England, and so in this country, the Protestant churches reacted from this situation.

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Bringing a new moral earnestness into religion, and a new ideal of conduct, and a new sensitiveness of conscience, they took the emphasis which had been put on adoration, and put it on admonition. The sermon displaced the service. The ritual which, it must be confessed, had ministered unhappily to superstition, was dismissed in disgrace. The church, which had been filled with light and color and incense and music, was now designedly constructed to be as cold and bare as possible. No appeal was made to the senses. Religion was brought into the pulpit on Sunday morning by the preacher, and when he and the congregation departed at noon on that day, they took it along with them. Not a vestige remained behind. To most persons, the meeting-house between Sundays was the most dreary of all dull places. They who went into it, on some infrequent errand, shivered even in the summer.

This change from church to meeting-house was a symbol of a like change in the relation of the church to society.

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Religion became an isolated and sombre fact. The church had been open all day long, and people old and young had gone freely in and out. The new meeting-house was tight-shut, except at hours of service, and children were forbidden to play in the yard. The function of religion was to forbid. It spoke in prohibition. It interfered with the pleasures, even the innocent pleasures, of the world. Not content to do battle with the ancient and elemental sins, it invented new ones, which it declared to be as bad as the old. To go to the theatre was a sin, no matter whether the play was bad or good; to dance was a sin, no matter under what conditions; a new definition of the proper observance of the Lord's Day presented to the tender conscience the possibility of a whole array of new transgressions.

However far these prohibitions were wise and necessary, the effect was to make the church appear as an austere censor of the common life. The Puritan minister who recorded in his diary that his sermon at a wedding was, by divine grace, the means of banishing

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from the occasion all "carnal joy," represented the situation in its most unsympathetic aspect. As he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing, and though he did go in,—thus far departing from the example of the Elder Brother,—all the dancing and the music stopped when he appeared.

The minister's text, that day, could hardly have been taken from the account of the presence of Jesus at the wedding in Cana. At that feast, Christ made plain for all time that, to His mind, the renunciation of the world demands nothing artificial or unnatural, signifies no inordinate solemnity of conduct, makes no sombre Christians, and sets no ban upon the pleasures of the world other than that which is set by any sense of the difference between right and wrong. Being bidden to the wedding feast, He went, and brought His disciples with Him; and His contribution to the festivity increased rather than diminished that carnal joy which the hard-featured preacher did his best to banish.

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The truth is that the pleasures are as essential as the virtues, and are vitally related to them. It is necessary not only that children should be taught to read and write, but that they should have opportunity to play. It is a satisfaction of instincts which are a divine part of human nature. The child who has no chance to play is hurt both in body and in soul. The Playground Association is engaged in the service of religion. Religious people may be of several minds as to the pleasures of the world, conventionally defined, but there is only one right mind regarding the need of pleasure for the children. The effective bringing forward of the kingdom of God, which is the mission of the church, begins when good people increase the happiness of youth. The newer parish houses have playgrounds on their roofs ; as if, with uplifted hands, they presented to heaven as their offering and sacrifice and sacramental gift, this sight of the glad faces of playing children.

As for the theatre, the matter is quite different. The theatre appeals,

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indeed, to a universal instinct, and that fact secures it against any attempt on the part of good citizens to abolish it. There it is, and there it will remain, and grow. But the theatre is an increasing menace to common morals. It presents a false idea of life, gradually breaks the barriers which guard the refinements and sanctities of the mind, makes a jest of the family, upon whose soundness all our social institutions rest, and develops that lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes which constitute worldliness as the open enemy of righteous living. Such is the condition of the stage that no prudent parents may permit their children to see plays concerning which they have not carefully informed themselves beforehand.

At the same time, the recent history of the theatre is notable for the appearance of plays which one can hardly see without being helped and bettered by the experience. Not only are the great classic dramas kept upon the stage, but new and original productions show a desire on the part of writers and

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managers and actors to restore the theatre to its true place in the life of the community. The dramatic sermon of "Everyman" has been followed by a series, short, indeed, but significant, of plays of high purpose. To neglect the performance of such plays is to miss a religious opportunity to share in the improvement of the theatre. And the improvement of the theatre means a lifting of the ideals of multitudes of people. It is a kind of church extension. It is a preaching of religion to great numbers of persons who are not accustomed to hear it preached in any other way.

The substantial reformation of the theatre is assisted not by those who abuse the stage without seeing it, but by those who go to the theatre, and whose absence when the play is bad is a disapproval which is noticed and felt.

The same is true of the betterment of society. Society must be reformed from within. The part of it which needs to change its ways will pay no heed to the distant voice of preachers, and will care nothing for the good

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opinion of the good people who, with all their excellences, are not in society. All their efforts are ineffective. Such changes as should be made in the customs of social life wait for the precept, and, still more, for the example, of Christian men and women for whom society cares much, who are in it by virtue of birth, or wealth, or better reasons, and are esteemed by it. It is the people who amount to something socially who decide how society shall keep Sunday, and whether it shall gamble or not. If Christian people of social position were to stay out of society, they would abandon their most important mission. Being in society, their opportunity opens before them daily.

It is to be remembered that there is a passive goodness which is in great peril of the contagion of evil. The passive persons catch disease. Not the doctor, not the nurse, who are made in a great degree immune by the fact of their active and aggressive attitude. They are fighting the disease, and the disease is in retreat.

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The passive, nervous persons, who are apprehensively conscious of the contagion, and are troubled for their own safety, catch the disease. And the same holds true socially.

They are in no great peril from the pleasures of the world who are engaged in a plain, definite contention with the evil of the world. Theirs is an aggressive goodness. They delight in all true happiness; they are merry and joyful, like the saints in the Old Testament; they are cheerful companions; they enjoy the world. But they hate the devil; and all their acquaintances know it. When temptation comes, when a sudden social alternative between right and wrong demands reply, when they must reveal themselves, they are assisted to say No by a consciousness that that is what everybody expects them to say.

These people are Christians in society. They save themselves and their neighbors. They keep the social current strong and clear, a river of refreshment and delight. And they have a thousand times more influence over

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prodigal sons than any of the elder brothers, or elder sisters, who, when they draw nigh the house and hear music and dancing, are angry and will not go in.

## **RELIGION AND THE FLESH**



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HE practice of religion is concerned not only with the world, but with the flesh.

The doctrine of the bad world was supported and confirmed by a doctrine of the bad flesh. While one of these doctrines, however, rested on observation, the other rested on philosophy. The world was bad in fact, as every wise observer knew, but there were some redeeming virtues ; it was not wholly given to evil. Indeed, as Christian thought about the matter became more clear, it was perceived that the world is not only the subject of redemption, but is capable of being redeemed. The business of the Christian is to make the bad world better.

But philosophy is a much more thoroughgoing process than experience, more positive and radical. It is less likely to be interrupted by inconsistent

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facts. The relation of religion to the flesh, being affected by a system of ancient philosophy, was accordingly much more hostile than the relation of religion to the world. It was a war of extermination.

The philosophy which played so vigorous a part in this field of ethics came out of the East, where the facts of life were explained by a doctrine of dualism. The opposing phenomena of light and darkness, and of good and evil, were attributed to two gods. The universe is filled with the warfare of these gods. They fight about us, and within us. The good god is entrenched in the soul, the bad god in the body. Matter, of which the body is composed, is inherently evil.

This law of sin which affects us as constantly as the law of gravitation, and is quite as mysterious, whence is it derived? Where does it get its malign influence over us? This philosophy answered, "From the body." The origin of evil is in the substance of matter. Made of matter, fashioned out of the dust of the earth, the body is the resi-

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dence of all the malign forces. That is what the Oriental teachers said.

This theory of the body as the source of all evil came gradually into some such place in the common thought of those days as is now taken by the idea of evolution. It was in the air. The church opposed it; it was condemned as heresy. Now as Manichæism, now as Gnosticism, now as Neoplatonism, the fathers fought it. Their efforts, however, were as ineffective as an endeavor to keep back the tide. The heresy became orthodox. The counsels of Christ concerning the body, where He advised the plucking out of offending eyes and the cutting off of offending hands, seemed to confirm the current thought. So did St. Paul's words, about keeping the body under, and about the strife between the spirit and the flesh. These teachings seemed to mean what the Oriental philosophy implied. The body is evil; all sin comes from that source; and the reasonable thing to do is to set our attack in that direction. We may expect to defeat the devil by weaken-

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ing and assailing and otherwise mastering the fortress in which he is entrenched,—the body.

The story of the renunciation of the flesh, whereby this doctrine of the evil of the body was applied to human life, is a pitiful chapter in the history of man. It is a record of starvation and torture, of pain of body and distress of soul. Duties are forsaken, hearts are broken, all the tender ties of life are severed, in this fierce passion to attain ideal holiness by hurting and maiming and gradually destroying the body. St. Simeon Stylites on his tall pillar,

“Thrice ten years,  
Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,  
In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and cold,  
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes and  
cramps,  
A sign betwixt the meadow and the cloud,”

bowing there in prayer, somebody counted twelve hundred times, and left off counting, while the saint went on bowing,—what a pitiful caricature he is of the religion of Christ, but what an admirable symbol of the renuncia-

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tion of the flesh ! He is the master of all the agonizing saints, the chief apostle of the ascetic life.

The spectacle of these men, making themselves miserable for the salvation of their souls, becomes not only pitiful but tragic when we perceive that they did not, after all, attain their pious purpose.

The sufferings of the man who by virtue of his painful efforts gains his end, makes his great discovery, wins his hard battles, are glorified by the result. We see that they were worth while. But most of these men failed. Withdrawing from the world, and thinking thereby to escape the temptations of the world, they carried the world's temptations with them. St. Jerome confessed that the solicitations of the flesh assailed him in the solitude of the desert with more fierceness than in the pagan society which he had abandoned. And all his natural infirmities of temper were increased by his austerities.

The monks of the deserts of Egypt and of the mountains of Cappadocia

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came out to take their part in the deliberations of church councils. They came from their days and nights of prayer and fasting, from their communion with God, from their renunciation of the flesh; and they showed how much it had all availed for the clearing of their spiritual sight and for the betterment of their souls. It had availed nothing. They were a horde of unclean, ignorant, and superstitious fanatics, worse than savages, whose only arguments were clubs and curses.

And on its milder side, in quiet monasteries, where the fierce austerities of the desert were kept under wise restraint, still the sermons on the eight sins of the monks show that all the common sins were present as in the outer world. Indeed, asceticism added a new sin, on which all the monastic teachers found it necessary to preach, — the sin *accedia*, which means indifference. The renunciation of the flesh produced the sin of indifference, a sheer weariness of spirit, wherein all life and all religion seemed but vanity and dull vexation.

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This failure of the effort to subdue the body to the purposes of the soul was the result of two causes.

The renunciation of the flesh failed to produce the desired spiritual results because it was in defiance of the will of God.

There is a revelation of God in the world and in ourselves. Our possession of a body is in itself a revelation of the will of God. Thus He has made us, because thus He would have us be. He has placed us in a world of sight and sound, of taste and feeling, and has given us senses to enjoy it all, because He desires us to enjoy it. The response to this revelation is not asceticism. That is a contradiction of the obvious meaning of the world. The grazing monks, who ate grass like the oxen, declared thereby that man at his best ought to live like an ox; but they reduced their whole ideal to absurdity. We are not to be ashamed, like some ancient philosophers, that we dwell in bodies. We are divinely made that way. Our part is to keep our nature open and sensitive and

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responsive to all the gracious influences of physical life.

Also, the renunciation of the flesh failed to attain its spiritual purpose because it was in disregard of the nature of man.

It tried to effect the betterment of man by negation, by putting out the evil. The parable of the swept and garnished chamber shows the working of that plan. The chamber is swept and garnished, clean and adorned ; but it is empty, and its emptiness invites the return of its former tenants, and more and worse than before. The effect of renunciation is to empty the soul ; but if the betterment stops there, in comes the devil, and seven other devils with him. The thing to do is to bring in good guests. That is essential. The true formula of effective improvement is, "The expulsive influence of the good."

The people who devoted themselves to the renunciation of the flesh found that they thought more about the flesh than about anything else. They could not help it. They aggravated all that side of life. The true way to renounce

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the flesh is to emphasize the spirit. The law of sin which we find in our members is escaped by obeying, more and more diligently, the law of God.

The right renunciation of the flesh is assisted by remembering certain truths about our bodies. The body is the dwelling of the spirit. It is to be kept fit for the soul to live in. We have got to live in our bodies: that is the unescapable fact. If they are enfeebled by indolence, if they are injured by neglect, if they are hurt by appetite, if they are poisoned by sin, we have got to live in them, just as we have made them. We are building day by day the house of the body, and are daily determining what sort of house it is, and are occupying it under advantages or disadvantages which we ourselves have in great measure determined.

There is still an idea prevalent among youth that the laws of religion and of society concerning sins of the flesh are only the arbitrary and unreasonable regulations of elderly and cold-blooded persons, and that the only serious

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consequence of breaking them is a loss of the esteem of those whose esteem is not of any great value. There are penalties attached to them, but the cleverness of youth may conceal the offences and escape the consequences. Science, however, has come now to reënforce the warnings of religion and of society. A study of the facts of mind and body shows that the punishment of the sins of the flesh waits for no discovery of the offender, and for no verdict ecclesiastical or social. It proceeds with the unerring and impartial promptness of fire. Lust and appetite poison body and soul, as fire burns. No sin of the flesh leaves the transgressor where he was before; he has injured himself.

The worship of the old gods, Bacchus and Venus, is still maintained. If anybody desires to ascertain how it felt in the old days to be persecuted by the votaries of pagan religions, he has only to attack the priests and pontiffs of these shrines in his own town. He will find out, speedily and sharply. The gods are worshipped

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with human sacrifices. They put their victims to slow torture. And, as in the former times, they disguise their purposes by the glamour of manifold attractions. The supply of victims is a profitable business. That is why an interference with it is so tragically resented.

The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and is to be kept sacred like a shrine. We guard a holy fire, upon an altar consecrated to the God of health and purity. The body is our living sacrifice which we are to give to God, sound, holy, and as He made it. The body is our means for accomplishing the work of the world. It is to be kept fit for use.

It is no sin to be comfortable, but if we get to depend on comforts so that we cannot be comfortable without them, we are venturing into the perilous neighborhood of sin. It is no sin to consider what we eat, and what we drink, and what we wear. Christ's admonition refers to nervous care about these things. But to be chiefly interested in clothes and food, to be more

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concerned about these provisions for the body than about the difference between right and wrong, to be more attentive to fashion than to conscience, to think with lively satisfaction of our pleasant meals, and not to think at all of that which nourishes the soul — this is to have what St. Paul calls a "carnal mind." And the carnal mind, he says, is enmity with God. It is opposed to God's supreme purposes for our life. The result of living in accordance with it is that human beings live like animals.

The carnal mind is not of necessity a vicious mind, though it opens us to temptation on that side. It is a mind which is satisfied with the gratification of the flesh. It is contented with that which appeals to the senses. The criticism of the wise upon it is not only that it dwells in the lower levels of life, next to the animals, but that it rests the great treasure of happiness upon insecure foundations. The pleasures of the flesh depend on the unstable senses, any one of which may at any moment be transformed into a source of pain.

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What we desire is such a relation to the body that our happiness, our expectation, and our true life are independent of it. Thus far, we would renounce it. Thus far, we would cast it from us. The true renunciation of the body is the exaltation of the spirit. When St. Paul said, "I keep under my body," he expressed only a half of the truth. He kept his body under by keeping up his soul. He delighted in the law of God. Meditating in it day and night, there was no place in his mind for petty or unworthy thoughts. Busy continually with the endeavor to attain his high ideals, to serve his generation, to do the constant deeds of ministry which he desired to do, he had no time for any of the baser part of life.

This is the true prescription for keeping the right relation between the body and the soul. The most wholesome exercise in which one can engage is social service. Sir Philip Sidney's fine counsel, "Whenever you hear of a good war, go to it," may well be applied to the present contention against the public enemies who are using the senses

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for their own gain. That which makes their fortune destroys the happiness of those by whom they make it. It is their deliberate business to stimulate the appetites which result in immorality and intoxication. They intend not only to minister to these elemental instincts, but to increase them for the increase of their own gain. The fact that the process means shame and torture of the bodies and souls of their neighbors does not deter them. They are organized to make money out of the sins of the flesh.

Against this sort of organization must be opposed the strength of counter-organization. No amount of sentiment, of pity, or of indignation will of itself avail anything. It is like opposing an invading army with petitions and entreaties and menaces from the side of the road. The only effective force against generalship is generalship. Combination must be fought with combination. The hope against these devourers of men and women and children is in the societies which are arraying good people against them.

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Every citizen who would do more than bemoan the sins of the flesh must give his time or his money to this kind of effort. On one side is the purpose to make money, no matter what it costs in human misery; on the other side is a Christian determination that all men and all women, however poor, shall have the right and the opportunity to possess their bodies in soberness and chastity.

The providing of public recreation, the building of baths, the opening of libraries and picture-galleries and conservatories, the free privilege of music, the widening of open spaces, the direction of games and exercise,— all this is a contribution to the campaign against the vices which are assisted by sluggishness of body and lack of better interest. The problem of rent, the problem of hours, the problem of wages, are all concerned in this matter, and call for the attention of religion. The connection between drunkenness and the conditions of work in mills, and between prostitution and the wages of women, is such as to

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make it idle and impertinent for the men who own these industries to give liberally to societies which deal with these evils, while at the same time they maintain the situation out of which the evils come. It is like endowing hospitals for the care of typhoid fever patients, and paying no attention to the supply of water. The initial consideration in all Christian business is the value of human life and character.

As for our own selves, all care of the body, like all enrichment of the mind, is our approach to that divine ideal which is declared in human nature. We are, indeed, to renounce whatever dulls our senses, masters our strength, enfeebles our frame, and makes us unresponsive to the manifold appeals of the world about us. But we are to make that renunciation complete by the consecration of the body, sound and strong, to the supreme purposes of the soul. Whatsoever things are true, and fine, and lovely, and uplifting, these are to engage our senses; to these we are to give our thoughts.

## **RELIGION AND THE DEVIL**



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THE attainment of character, which is the supreme requirement of religion, implies not only a renunciation of the world and of the flesh, but also of the devil. Not the devil of theology, who is the embodiment of the mystery of evil; but the devil of ethics, who is a convenient symbol of the wickedness of the world.

It is a curious fact that in the *Pastoral Epistles* very earnest warnings against the devil are addressed to bishops.

The warnings stand at the end of a list of virtues and vices which are particularly commended to the attention of bishops. A bishop must be vigilant, sober, and of good behavior; he must be of a temperate habit and of a peaceable disposition, a patient person, of a grave demeanor. Twice he is warned

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against the love of money: he must not be greedy of filthy lucre, he must not be covetous. Twice he is warned against the temptations of a hasty temper; he must be no striker and no brawler. These admonitions against violence remind us of the turbulent times in which the words were written, when there was persecution without and controversy within, and earnest men were inclined to enforce their arguments by using the minor premiss of the fist and the major premiss of the club. St. Paul never forgot how he had himself assisted in the stoning of Stephen.

It is by no means certain that the bishops who are here addressed held such an office as the name suggests to us. This, however, is of no immediate concern. They who are thus had in mind are the leading Christians of the place. They are esteemed by their brethren as good examples. They are the best people, the most earnest, the most devout, the most interested in the affairs of the church.

These are the people who are warned

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with solemn repetition to be on their guard against the devil.

The fact suggests a distinction between the temptations which may be labelled "of the devil" and those which may be labelled "of the world" and "of the flesh." The temptations of the world lead to offences which may be described as the sins of society. The temptations of the flesh lead to the sins of the body. But the temptations of the devil lead to what may be called the sins of the spirit. One may be innocent of the transgressions of the world and of the flesh, and yet be under the dominion of the devil. Such a person is apt to be very religious. Such a sin is one of the maladies which attack the spiritual life.

Thus the eminently religious persons by whom Jesus was rejected and persecuted and at last crucified were not addicted to the sins of the world. They kept themselves apart from the world. Some of the members of their guild were called "bleeding Pharisees," because they went about with eyes blindfolded, that they might not even see the

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world, and were always bruising themselves on sharp corners, in consequence. And all of them were grave and serious churchmen, whom nobody suspected of frivolity. Neither were they addicted to the sins of the flesh. They fasted twice in the week, and kept the moral law with anxious care. The trouble with the scribes and Pharisees was that they committed the sins which are connected with the devil.

It is characteristic of these sins that they are very respectable. The sinner is not made obnoxious to the police. One may commit such offences every day, like the Pharisees, and yet keep the esteem of the community. They are sins of motive: so that while we seem to be living aright because of conscience, and the fear and love of God, we are really living aright because that is the conventional, or convenient, or prudent thing to do. Or they are sins of thought: so that while our actions and words are excellent, our hearts behind them are filled with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. Thus Jesus called the Pharisees hypo-

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rites. "Ye outwardly appear righteous unto men," He said, "but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

The arraignment of the Pharisees, which astonished the listening people, who held them in high respect, probably astonished the Pharisees themselves. For one of the snares of the devil is to persuade men that respectability is righteousness. And another snare of the devil is to persuade men that vices are virtues.

It is a doctrine of the devil that respectability is equivalent to righteousness.

The doctrine is one of easy and popular acceptance. The young man in the Gospel who said of the commandments, "All these have I kept from my youth up," was under the influence of it. His satisfaction was suggested by the devil. The precise iniquity which kept back the Pharisees from a knowledge of the truth concerning Jesus and concerning themselves, and made them the enemies of God when they thought they were His friends, was the conviction that they were good enough already.

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The New Testament teaches the possibility of the damnation of the respectable. The rich man in the parable, who awoke in the other world in torment, was a most respectable citizen. He lived in one of the handsomest houses of the town, and his gracious hospitality enriched the social life of the neighborhood. The priest and the Levite who saw a wounded man on the Jericho road, and prudently passed by on the other side, were on their way to church. On they went, without a qualm of conscience, and presently, in the devotions of the service, they thanked God for a safe journey. The Pharisee who said, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," told the truth. He was not as many other men. He was no extortioner; he was no adulterer. He attended divine service with unfailing regularity and made his proper contribution to the support of the institutions of religion.

There is a long procession of these people through the chapters of the Gospels, a long and pious procession. They pass by with hands folded, pray-

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ing or singing as they go, straight in the direction of the bottomless pit. They are all respectable. They deceive us. But when they come to God, after their estimable lives, and say, "Lord, Lord, we have preached in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and done wonderful works; we come bringing our good record with us," the Lord looks at them, and says: "I never knew you. I never heard a prayer you said, — did you pray to Me? I never heard a sermon which you preached, — did you preach for Me?" No, they preached and prayed and did their excellent works of charity and public service for their own satisfaction. They had no religion; they had respectability in the place of it.

This is described in the third person and illustrated out of the ancient pages of the Bible, but we know that it touches all of us. It concerns a present and impending peril. It reveals a situation such as made even St. Paul say, "Lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

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The trouble with mere respectability is that it is negative, conventional, formal; without serious meaning, without worthy purpose, without warmth or life. It is like a painted post. Even a crooked tree which is alive has some sort of soul, responds however feebly to the influences of the earth and air, and may grow. There is no growth in a post.

The difference between respectability and religion is like the difference between a painted fire and a fire. The fire in the picture may be admirably laid, and may blaze over a hearth which is immaculately swept, but the real fire,— for all its ashes and disorder, is warm, it flashes and flames, it burns high and low, it is alive. Christ saw some such difference between Pharisees, correct and unresponsive, and sinners, who, with all their defects, had some understanding of their own shortcomings, knew that they were far from good, and honestly desired to be better. They are presented side by side in the feast in Simon's house, where the self-righteous

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host watches the woman who washes the feet of Jesus with her tears and wipes them with her hair. The sins of the sinners were such as had to do with the world and with the flesh ; the sins of the Pharisees were of the spirit, the results of falling into the snares of the devil.

Not only does the devil persuade us that respectability is righteousness and religion, he also assures us that vices are virtues.

It is in this occupation that he is busying himself when he appears as an angel of light. He thus appeals to good people, who have a sincere desire for virtue, and who would not do a wrong thing if they knew it. He makes the wrong look right.

This was the procedure of the three temptations in which Jesus summed up the alternatives which met Him at the beginning of His ministry. If He can turn stones into bread, why not ? He is hungry ; may He not provide Himself with food ? If the angels will uphold Him with their wings, why not leap from a pinnacle of the temple ?

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Even the third and plainest temptation, to kneel down and do a moment's homage to the devil, is confused by the good results which are to follow: He may thus free the world from the bondage of sin and pain. It is the old temptation to do a little reasonable evil that great benefit may come thereby. We need to stop and consider, before we perceive that these temptations — at least the first and second — are temptations at all. They look like profitable suggestions.

One ancient vice which is thus disguised to appear like virtue is the sin of pride.

The good side of pride is a high appreciation of our own privileges. We rejoice that, in the distribution of the good things of this life, so many have fallen to our share. We honestly appreciate our own excellent qualities, our special gifts, abilities, and possessions. Pride, thus far, is not inconsistent with humility. That quiet virtue gets its name from *humus*, the ground, and does not necessarily imply that we are to kneel upon the ground; the

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humble man may stand erect upon it, basing himself upon the actual facts. To conceal them, and thus appear worse than we really are, may be no better than an inverted hypocrisy.

Pride becomes a vice when they who have possessions use them wholly for their own satisfaction, and draw a line of separation between themselves and their less privileged neighbors. The divine purpose of possessions is to share them. They are meant to minister not to self-conceit, but to social service. They are the measure of social opportunity. Thus, Jesus was contending with the devil when He opposed the religious and racial antagonism of His countrymen towards their neighbors. When He praised the Samaritan, and crowned the humility of the publican with His approval, He chose these alien heroes for His parables because He expressed thereby His mind concerning current prejudice. When, on His way to Jerusalem, He dined at Jericho with the publican Zacchæus, He shocked profoundly the social sense of the community, but this He did

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according to His purpose, breaking down those ugly barriers, even with violence. He saw plainly that the condemnation of men by classes is a stoppage of all social progress. It is false, for men cannot thus be judged by wholesale; and it affects society, as some wise man has said, like putting all the dough in one pan and the yeast in another. It is the combination of the knowledge, of the interests, of the needs, of the spirit, of the rich and poor, the cultivated and the uncultivated, the progressives and the conservatives, which stimulates and improves society.

Another old and ugly vice which is attired in the pleasant garments of virtue, with a shining halo round its head, is the sin of hating our neighbors for the love of God.

The consecration of hatred to the service of religion appears with all frankness in the Old Testament. "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?" cries a psalmist. And he answers his own question, saying, "I hate them with a perfect hatred." Then he adds, in all honesty and

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confidence, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." The idea that it is wicked to hate even the Lord's enemies with a perfect hatred has no place whatsoever in his mind.

Then came Jesus, with His contradiction of all that, saying, "Love your enemies." But the old vice kept its honored place among the virtues. It early entered into Christian controversy. It set Christians to persecute Christians. It was in the camp throughout the "wars of religion." It was responsible for the Inquisition and all its fiendish horrors. It invented those implements of torture which one finds hanging idle and rusty on the walls of old castles, marked with the sign of the cross by the finger of the devil.

Only within modern times has the sin of hating our enemies for the love of God been found out. It was accounted an evidence of earnestness. It was a mark of conviction. Who-

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ever was disposed to recognize the everlasting fact of difference, and to consent to its presence in the community, was held to be a lukewarm Christian, and to belong of right to that parish of Laodicea which is condemned in the Revelation. It was considered a conscientious Christian duty to stone our enemy with hard words, and to poison him with bitter sentences. We thought it was right; that is the curious thing about it. The deception was complete. We were taken so cleverly in the devil's snare that we did not know it.

We read in the Gospels, with all plainness, that Christ was put to death not by common sinners, but by men of religion, by churchmen; and that the sole occasion was a difference of churchmanship. They were good churchmen; He was not, they said. They crucified Him that they might protect thereby the ancient customs which He had set at naught, and save the church. Nevertheless, we disregarded the great lesson. We went on in their spirit, blind to the fact that we were following in their steps. In a thousand contro-

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versies, we crucified the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

We see that now, as we turn the unreadable pages of the eager debates. We see that hatred and uncharitable-  
ness, and the spirit of strife, and the willingness to believe evil, and all unbrotherliness are of the devil, and were by him interjected into Christian discussion when he persuaded men that vice is virtuous.

To renounce the devil is to turn our backs upon those sins which have their source not in the world, nor in the flesh, but in the spirit. It is to keep our hearts with diligence, to control not our words and actions only, but our thoughts, to live as in His presence who sees in secret. It is to change a formal and indifferent respectability into a living religion. It is to keep our virtues from degenerating into vices.



**THE REENFORCEMENT OF  
RELIGION**



## THE REENFORCEMENT OF RELIGION



HE statement of the requirement of religion in terms of aspiration, of motive, and of service, and the carrying of the matter into detail as regards the world, the flesh, and the devil, tend to discourage those who perceive that these things are true, but doubt their ability to fulfil them. This state of mind is met in the last paragraphs of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount is concerned with the ideal life. In the course of it, Christ criticises the current standards of religion. He says that in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven, these standards must be exceeded. He points to the men who are conspicuous for their religious zeal, the eminent churchmen of His time, and tells His disciples that theirs is a misleading example. You must be

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better than that, He says. He compares the common righteousness — superficial, material, mechanical, and easy — with the true righteousness, spiritual and sincere, and including the inmost thoughts and motives.

Such a statement calls out three quite different kinds of response.

Some of the hearers begin at once to think about their neighbors. "That is pretty hard," they say, "on So-and-So who pretends to be so pious. I hope that Ephraim took to heart what the preacher said about swearing; and that Manassah, with his bad temper, heeded that mighty reproof of those who are angry with their brethren without a cause; and that Levi will wash his face when he fasts, and not look so much more solemn than he really is; and that Reuben, whose name is always so conspicuous on subscription lists, noticed what was said about ostentatious giving."

To these critics who have enjoyed the sermon because it seemed so admirably adapted to their neighbors Christ says, "Judge not," and illus-

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trates and enforces the saying with the grave humor of the parable of the mote and the beam. "You will be ready," He says, "to attend to these bits of dust in your brother's eye, when you have improved your sight by taking out the stick of wood which is in your own eye."

A second class of hearers begin at once to think of nothing at all. They agree that the sermon was excellent. They have no criticism of it. They praise it for its interest and eloquence. But it makes no difference. They are in no way affected by that which they have heard. They do not ask, like the hearers of John the Baptist by the Jordan, and the hearers of Peter in Jerusalem, "What shall we do?" It does not occur to them to do anything. They look about at the clouds and the trees, and at their companions, noting who is present and who is absent. They consult the time, and go home to dinner.

To hearers such as these, Christ says, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

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But there is a third company of hearers. They are thinking not of their neighbors, and not of things in general, but of themselves. In the presence of such an ideal as has been uplifted in the sermon, they say, "It is too high. I cannot attain unto it." They are discouraged. They consider the great requirement, and compare their own small lives with it, and are dismayed. The contrast distresses them, but the impossibility of doing anything about it distresses them still more. If it were only a matter of ceasing to do evil and learning to do well, the case would not be so hopelessly difficult; but what the Lord requires is a new quality of being, a new series of motives, a new way of thinking. Righteousness, it seems, consists not in putting away our sins only, but in putting away our sin. It demands a change not in our habits only, but in our selves.

These people have perceived the real meaning of the new teaching. They understand that Jesus has proposed a new definition of character.

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He has taken the old commandments which all respectable people have been obeying and has so interpreted them that nobody can obey them completely. Before the sermon, they were ready to say with the excellent young ruler, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." They were ready to pray with the devout Pharisee, "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, adulterers." They had no such petition in their litany as, "God be merciful to me, a sinner;" and they would have resented the suggestion that they ought to pray, "God be merciful to me a miserable sinner." But if extortion is to be defined as any taking of an unbrotherly advantage, however well within the terms of law, and if adultery is to be defined as any sensual look or thought, the whole standard of right living is thereby changed tremendously, and their estimate of themselves is changed with it.

The result of such a conception of righteousness is displayed with all frankness in the confessions of St.

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Paul. "Touching the law," he says, — meaning the letter of the law, — "I was blameless." He had never murdered anybody, nor stolen anything. But touching the new law, the old law fulfilled, the heart of the law, "Wretched man that I am," he cries, "who shall deliver me from this body of death!" At once, however, he answers his own question: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

To produce in the soul of the conscience-stricken hearer this hope and confidence and gratitude is the purpose of the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount when He says, "Ask and ye shall receive." The task is difficult, the needed reformation seems impossible, the ascent from satisfied respectability to true religion is like climbing up the steep face of a straight cliff, but there is help; there is divine and sufficient help.

This help is to be had by asking. The act is emphasized. We must ourselves do something in order to get an assisting response. We may not be contented with a passive mind.

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There is, indeed, a "wise passiveness." Wordsworth, with his profound experience in the appreciation of nature, advises it as the ideal mood in the presence of the landscape. We are not to be introspective, nor anxious, nor overdesirous of results. We are to submit ourselves to the gentle influences of sky or plain or sea. This applies to nature what Christ applies to our relation to all life. We are not to be nervous about the morrow. We are to rely with confidence on the divine care.

Even here, however, in the midst of these strong admonitions against worry, there is a limit set to our wise passiveness. There is even here an antecedent condition of activity. If we are to have "all these things," the necessities of life, we must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. There is, indeed, a benediction of passivity. It is illustrated by the "great courtesy of God," who grants His rain and sun to the just and to the unjust. But there are better benedictions which the passive

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miss. The material blessings of food and shelter depend on the fulfilment of these social conditions which the "kingdom of God and His righteousness" imply. And the spiritual blessings of uplift and guidance, and moral help and inspiration depend on asking. We must not expect to be delivered passively from the bonds of our sins. We must ask, we must seek, we must knock. The doors of the richest blessings are shut, and wait for us to present ourselves and request to have them opened.

Thus Christ's ministry of mercy was not general, but particular. He never healed a town, nor a crowd. The corridors of the pool of Bethesda were filled with the sick that day when He said to one man, "Wouldst thou be made whole," and healed him. The multitude in the Capernaum street was thronging about Him when He said, "Who touched me?" They were all touching Him, but the virtue, the healing power which went out from Him, had no magical efficacy to heal everybody. He cured one because she

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asked. So in Jericho, when they said, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by," one blind beggar cried, "Lord, that I may receive my sight!" and the Lord gave him his sight. There were a hundred men in that town, beggars and blind, who had no help from Him. His presence did not bless them. Because they did not ask Him.

All the time, God waits to be gracious. His compassions fail not. His heart of sympathy goes out to us in our difficulties, in our struggles. He knows our needs. But He has bound Himself, if we may so express it, under the conditions of His wise ordering of our life. And one of them is declared in the words, "Ask, and ye shall receive." Our part and His part in the matter are here set down together. Thus all harvests depend on the essential condition of planting, and all business prosperity on the essential condition of working, and all social happiness on the essential condition of showing one's self friendly.

This asking is, of course, what is meant in the language of religion by the

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act of prayer. It is not necessary, however, that it should take the conventional forms of petition. The relation of prayer to desire is simply psychological. The effect of giving to the act of asking the form of prayer is to make it definite. It is thus brought out of the possible vagueness of unexpressed desire and put into words, and thereby made concrete; not for the sake of God, who knows our necessities before we ask, and also our ignorance in asking, but for our own sake, for the deepening of our desire. We wish for help against our besetting sins, for strength to live nearer to our ideals; we wish for better thoughts and better motives, for a better self. The wish is an act of asking. But we intensify the wish when we put our desire into articulate speech. For human nature works that way.

Some people may be able to get along without it, but it is a common experience that the divine condition is better fulfilled when we kneel down and ask in prayer for the satisfaction of our needs. O God, help me to meet

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this one particular daily temptation, which I name before Thee. Thou knowest my weakness, and I know Thy promises of strength. Fulfil now, O Lord, these promises in me. Direct the thoughts of my heart. Help me not only not to do this evil, but not to desire to do it. Protect me against my pleasure in it. Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. This I ask, to-day and every day, in His name who said, "Ask, and ye shall receive."

Asking, then, is the condition of receiving. This is one of the everlasting facts of human life. The other is like it: Receiving is the sure consequence of asking.

It is like it, but it goes beyond it. "Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." It is in the present tense, because it is a matter of present experience; and in the future tense, — "it shall be opened," — because it is true eternally, an abiding promise of divine renewal.

The promise is stated in general

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terms. It assures no exact correspondence between the request and the reply. It gives no guarantee that if we ask for this, that, and the other, we shall certainly receive this, that, and the other. The words of our prayers are inadequate, and God does not read them according to a literal interpretation. The specifications of our prayers are affected by our ignorance of the present and of the future; and God attends to the spirit and not to the letter of our petitions. We do not know enough to pray aright. We would be answered according to the wise providence of God. We would receive what He would have us have.

The chief apostle asked, but did not receive; he did not receive the exact thing for which he prayed. The supreme saint had the same experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. He who prayed, "Let this cup pass from me," nevertheless drank it to the dregs. Yet they both received. They both received the blessing for which they prayed, but in another form: not in its material form, but in its

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spiritual equivalent. "Lord," they cried, "I am too weak to bear this; take it away." And what the Lord did was not to take it away, but to give them strength to bear it. That was the spiritual equivalent.

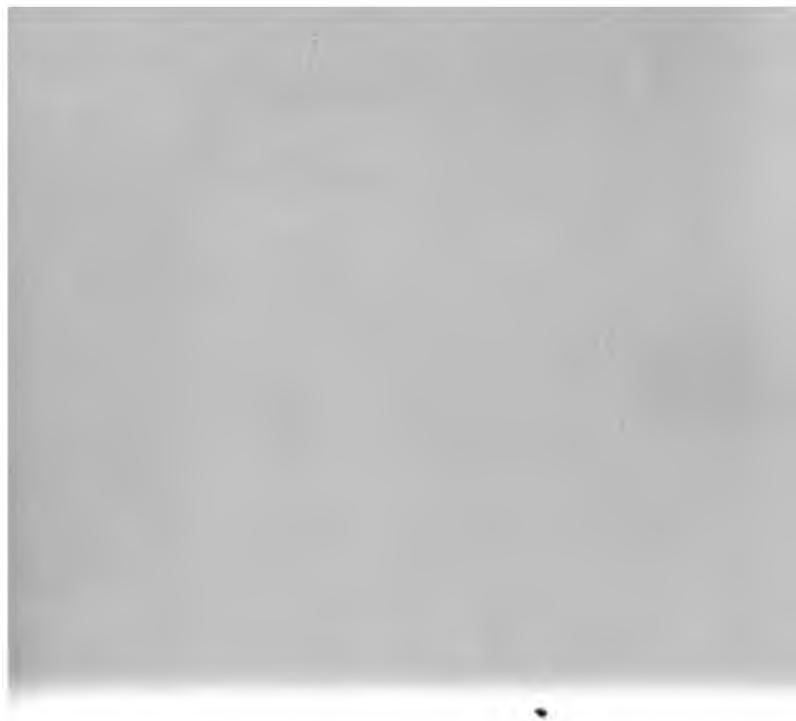
It is in this sense that every one that asketh receiveth. The promise may not be fulfilled in the lesser details, for which we prayed because we knew no better. It is fulfilled in a benediction of which the denied request was but a faint symbol. God gives us more than we ask. We knock and the door is opened, and we enter into unexpected places. Sometimes we are disappointed. But we go on, following the unseen guide, and presently we come into the paradise of perfect peace. We sought a passing satisfaction, and we are made partakers of a satisfaction which no chance can change. We cried out for sight, but we were blind and did not know what sight is; at first, the new light hurt our eyes, and we felt for the moment that the cool blindness was better, but only for the moment. We asked for help, and the

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Lord helped us as the physician does, in ways unexpected and beyond our understanding, and painful; but we received help.

Thus religion brings with it not only a requirement, but a reënforcement. It demands much, but it enables those who use its privileges to meet its demands with strength.

## **THE MEANS OF GRACE**



## THE MEANS OF GRACE



HAT reënforcement of the will which is given in religion for the asking is increased by the means of grace.

For grace means moral and spiritual strength. It is the blessing of God applied immediately to daily life. We need it; we know that well enough. We need increase of grace, that we may be enabled to encounter our temptations with success, to make good use of our opportunities, and, in general, to live our lives aright. Grace is made necessary by the exceeding difficulty of being good.

Anybody who finds it quite easy to be good is in a perilous position. Something is the matter with him. Either his conscience is so dull or discouraged that it has ceased to trouble him, or his ideal of goodness is so low that he can reach it without effort.

In the light of the Christian definition

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of character, it is exceedingly difficult to be good. Our standard of right may not be so high as it ought to be, but every day we fail to reach it. Every day we are enabled to understand, at a long distance, that bitter cry of St. Paul when he said, "The good that I would, I do not; and the evil that I would not, that I do." We need help. We need to follow the example of the wise commander, who, finding the fight too hard for him, calls for reënforcements.

The good Christian, realizing that it is mighty hard to be good, will bring to his aid all possible assistance. He will defend himself, as best he may. If he suspects that the road to the left is beset by liers-in-wait, he will take the road to the right. He will join himself to the protecting company of others who are on their way to the same destination, as travellers across the desert go in caravans, that their numbers may keep them from the attack of robbers. He will avail himself, if he may, of power from on high. He will make use of all the means of grace.

## THE MEANS OF GRACE

Various misunderstandings as to the means of grace arise from three kinds of confusion: a confusion of the phrase with the fact, a confusion of the irregular with the invalid, and a confusion of ritual with righteousness.

The first confusion is of the phrase with the fact.

The facts with which we deal in the means of grace have to do with God and the soul. And that implies that they belong to the region of the indefinable, of the mysterious, of that which we can only in small part understand. The relation between God and the soul must be expressed in some sort of language; but no words are adequate. Indeed, in dealing with this matter, words are not only inadequate, but misleading; for, of necessity, they express the spiritual in terms of the physical. It may be possible to escape this condition by use of the technical and accurate definitions of philosophy, but for the purposes of religion the language of philosophy is not only difficult, but foreign. For we naturally express our religious faith and emotion

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in the words of the Bible, a book which contains not a formula of philosophy from beginning to end. Accordingly, when we would set forth in the creed the exaltation of Christ, we say that He sits at the right hand of God. It is a phrase which easily conveys to unreflective minds the idea of a celestial throne, on which the Almighty is sitting, like a king. The phrase is only in a poetical or symbolical sense an expression of the fact. When we say, "The fact must be this or that, because the phrase which describes it is thus or so," we fall into error.

Thus baptism is described as regeneration; we are born again. But when we make the description serve as a definition, we enter immediately into the fallacy of Nicodemus, who said, "How can a man be born when he is old?" A modern form of this fallacy was the position of those who found that in some places in the New Testament the word "regeneration" implies a moral change, and said, "How can the sprinkling of a few drops of water effect a moral change?" The phrase

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is in the language of poetry and symbol. It means that so great are the possibilities of blessing which are involved in the membership of the church, that baptism, whereby we are admitted into that membership, is like a new birth.

Also, in the Holy Communion, we say that we receive the body and blood of Christ. But when we try to make the fact fit the phrase, we fall into the fallacy of the congregation at Capernaum, who said, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Evidently, He cannot, and would not. The sentence is a symbol — to us now a remote and difficult symbol — of participation and intimacy. A literal interpretation, or even a spiritual explanation of a literal interpretation, misses the truth. It mistakes the counter for the coin. It identifies the fact with the phrase. It overlooks the constant habit of Holy Scripture, which continually speaks in metaphor. The bread is the Lord's body, the wine is the Lord's blood, only as it is said that Christ sits at God's right hand.

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A second confusion is of the irregular with the invalid.

These two adjectives as applied to spiritual functions have very different meanings. They imply altogether different results. In a transaction with a bank, you may present a check which misspells your name, and get the money for which it calls. The check is irregular, but that will not hinder the payment. But if you present a check which is signed by somebody who has no money in that bank, you get nothing. The check is invalid. A like distinction governs the ministry of the sacraments.

Here are the sacraments of baptism and of the Holy Communion administered by two different men. One man has been ordained by a bishop; the other man has been ordained by a group of his neighbors. What is the difference? It may be expressed either in terms of canon law, or in terms of divine providence. Under canon law, the ministry of the man who has not been episcopally ordained is irregular, and his sacraments are

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irregular; for the canon law requires a certain procedure of entrance into the ministry, and recognizes no other. But under the divine providence, the blessing of God comes with the sacrament, however irregular, into the receptive soul. This has always been accepted in the sacrament of baptism, which, though administered irregularly, by lay people, is nevertheless accounted valid. They who come to any ministry with open hearts, with penitence and faith, find the sacraments the means of grace. They know it. They have had experience of blessing. They may or may not admit that the sacraments which they receive are irregular; they know, beyond all assaults of argument, that they are valid.

A third confusion which hinders a true understanding of the means of grace is of ritual with righteousness.

This is of all religious fallacies the oldest, — the idea that God cares more for ceremony than he does for conduct. It is the oldest and the most pervasive. It appears in the notion that attendance at public prayers and par-

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ticipation in sacraments make the greater part of true religion. The truth is that in the New Testament these duties have to be looked for with a microscope. The emphasis is on character. The call is to live a righteous life, to keep the moral law, to be honest, to be truthful, to be a good neighbor and a good citizen. These are the things for which God cares. The sacraments, and all the sacramental rites which accompany them, are means of grace. They are directed towards moral and spiritual results. They are of value in proportion as they assist to bring such results about.

Thus the water of baptism, as St. Paul says plainly, never saved anybody; but the answer of a good conscience. The bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are without value, and, as St. Paul says, do more harm than good, unless they minister to the moral life. The test of right religion is not the punctuality with which people go to church, but the kind of people they are in consequence of going to church.

To these three confusions — of the

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phrase with the fact, of the irregular with the invalid, and of ritual with righteousness — may be added a mistaken distinction between the sacred and the secular.

There is a distinction, plainly enough. There is an obvious difference between a schoolhouse and a church, between the thirteen books of Euclid and the thirteen epistles of St. Paul. But when we try to put the things of the spirit definitely on one side, and the things of the mind and of the body on the other side, we are endeavoring to divide into parts that which has true life only in combination. The two parts of hydrogen in water may be separated from the one part of oxygen, but the water in that condition is not good for drinking. It is not water, but an exhibit of chemical elements. And in like manner, the whole man and the whole life of man go together.

The first commandment of religion summons us to love God with all our heart and mind and strength, with our whole being. And the blessing of God comes to us with all of these activities.

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Thus in the First Epistle of St. John the distinctive benediction of each of the sacraments is promised in connection with the moral and social life. The distinctive benediction of baptism is a divine birth, and St. John says, "Every one that loveth is born of God." The distinctive benediction of the Lord's Supper is a divine indwelling, and St. John says: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Grace means help from God, and is ministered in all manner of ways, and amidst all these differences is the same divine thing. It comes by the reading of good books, and by the companionship of good friends. We know that we have received it because we are uplifted, energized, directed, strengthened. It comes by the sacraments, and its presence is made known by the same evidence. It is not one thing in church, and another thing at home. It is not grace in religion, and something else in society. Everywhere and al-

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ways it is the same divine blessing, and under all conditions it is sacramental and mysterious, like the breath of the wind.

One of the means of grace is an environment of expectation. I mean that anybody who is trying to be good will be mightily assisted by keeping in the company of the good. One of the means of growth is good ground. The seed may be good, but the parable of the sower shows to what different harvests it comes under different conditions. So one of the means of grace is good neighborhood. To this we owe the greater part of our own righteousness, to the privilege of residence among people who expect us to do right.

The ecclesiastical name of the organized good neighborhood is the church. The most valuable influences of the church depend upon the fact that it is an environment of good expectation. Baptism is a means of grace because it admits people into this environment. Thus it is defined in the church catechism as the act whereby we are made members of

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Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, because these are three descriptions of the church: which is the body of Christ, the household of God, and the kingdom of heaven. The answer to the question, Precisely what is accomplished in baptism? is, By baptism persons are admitted to the membership of the church.

Another means of grace is a decided initiative. This is only a condensed statement of the plain psychological fact that if we really desire to keep a good resolution, we must begin strong. We must not only exercise our will in an emphatic determination, and our patience in a resolute endeavor to admit no exceptions, but, if we are altogether wise, we must make the matter public. Thus we bring the environment of expectation to bear definitely upon our case.

Whoever makes a resolve in the secret of his own soul may break it without losing any respect other than his own; but if we make our good resolve in the hearing of our neighbors,

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then when temptation comes we are provided with reënforcements. We say, "Now if I do this thing which I said I would not do, all of my friends will look upon me with astonishment, and I shall be ashamed."

Thus it is that confirmation is a means of grace. It takes advantage of the plain conditions of human nature. It is the making of a great resolution in such a manner that all our acquaintances shall help us to keep it. Up stands one among his neighbors, and declares himself on the Lord's side. And when he kneels, and hands of benediction are laid on his head, he is manifestly blessed. He receives power from on high. Not only the theologian, but the psychologist, will tell us that.

A third means of grace is the practice of the presence of God. I mean a continual consciousness of the divine nearness, for strength, for comfort, for serenity of mind, for guidance, for protection. Whoever is thus aware of God, cries in temptation, "Thou, God, seest me"; and in difficulty, "I

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can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"; and in trouble, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"; and in the deepest grief, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." And these words of confidence bring spiritual results. They verify the saying, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." The same effects are brought about by prayer, from which we rise up, when we pray aright, with the sun shining in our soul.

The word and the prayer meet in the Holy Communion, which is a means of grace because it enables us to realize this divine presence. The promise is there fulfilled which declares that He will dwell in us and we in Him. God is made real to us in the person of Jesus Christ, and Christ is made real anew in the breaking of the bread and in the pouring of the wine; and when we receive the bread and wine, we receive Him into our souls.

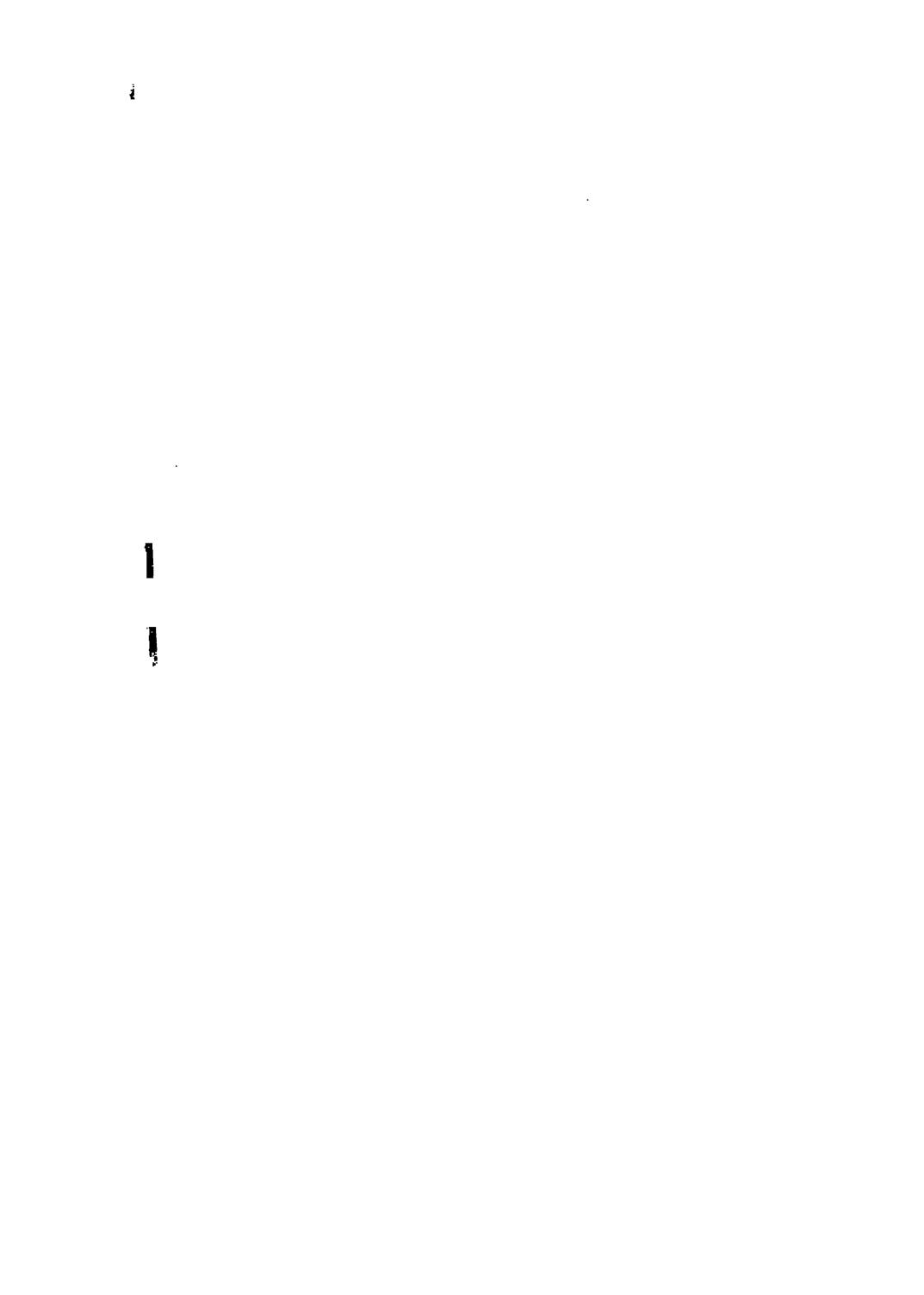
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For Christ comes in this sacrament as our friend comes in his letter. Here is the written page, an outward and visible sign, and the page brings the mind, the will, the heart, the love, the spiritual presence of our friend. And here are bread and wine, bringing the benediction of Him from whom they come. And the truth of this we know by our experience. We know that we have actually found this sacramental feast nourishing to our souls. We have come hoping for light and power and courage and comfort, and have found them all. As we go away, the consciousness of the presence of God goes with us.

An environment of expectation, a decided initiative, and the practice of the presence of God — baptism, confirmation, and the holy communion ; we know that they are means of grace, because we have tried them and found them satisfying. We can recommend them. In a world in which it is hard to be good, they who are wise will look about for help. And they will find it in the means of grace.



THE ATTAINMENT OF HAPPINESS



## THE ATTAINMENT OF HAPPINESS



HE result of all this is the attainment of happiness, here and hereafter.

Against the universal background of mystery stand the fundamental facts of religion: the being of God and the soul of man. They are attested by revelation and by miracle; by revelation, in the uncommon experience of uncommon people; and by miracle, the manifestation of God in uncommon events, and in the common life. Revelation and miracle meet in the supreme disclosure of God in Jesus Christ. That disclosure of the being of God and of the soul of man declares the supreme requirement of religion to be character; defined in terms of aspiration, of motive, and of service, and applied to the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. For

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the mastery of the evil and the gaining of the ideal good, religion provides not only counsel, but reënforcement; in prayer and sacrament. And the purpose of it on the part of God is the happiness of man.

It is true that the Christian religion has made a considerable contribution to the stock of human misery. It has often aggravated the ills of life. It has often multiplied them. To the horrors of persecution it has added the terrors of conscience. It has darkened the sky. But all this has been a perversion of its true meaning. And during it all, in quiet households whose affairs have no place in history, it has brought patience and peace and comfort. In the days of pagan persecution, it so filled the hearts of the Christians with great joy that they were recognized in the streets. The happiness of their souls shone in their faces. The Christian religion, mistakenly understood and mistakenly applied, has afflicted the heart of man, but its true mission, abundantly fulfilled, is to bring peace and a serene mind.

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With all our differences of disposition and of circumstances, there is one thing in which we all agree. We all have one desire. When the good fairy came, in the old stories, and offered the hero three wishes, whatever he would choose, he always wished for the same thing. Wise or foolish, he always wished for the same thing. He said to himself, "How can I get the greatest happiness?" He desired to be happy. So do we, also. Our common and universal desire is to be happy.

In the language of religion, the synonym of happiness is salvation. The words mean substantially the same thing. To be saved is to be safe and sound; it is to abound in health and happiness.

This happiness which in religion is thus called salvation may be desired as a future blessing or as a present possession.

A generation ago, the prevailing desire of those who spoke the language of religion was for salvation as a future blessing. They were devoutly intent upon the world to come. The present

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world was regarded with indifference or with hostility. Favorite hymns began with the proposition that "the world is very evil," and with the resolution to have as little to do with it as possible. "I'm but a stranger here, Heaven is my home. Earth is a desert drear, Heaven is my home." A typical figure of a common mind was Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress" who, finding himself a resident in the City of Destruction, proceeded immediately to get out. He seems not to have thought for a moment about starting a Good Government Club, or a social settlement, or even a church. His instinct directed him towards self-preservation. It did not occur to him that the city might be saved. He abandoned it, in haste, for the salvation of his own soul.

At best, the present was considered as a preliminary period, a time of preparation and probation. People thought that life would really begin after death. Just now, under these present skies, in this antechamber of eternity, we are waiting. We are like

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players, expecting our turn to come upon the stage, and meanwhile putting in the time as best we may. Or like students, getting ready for an examination which shall admit us into a life of privilege. The prevailing mood was one of expectation. At least, this was the ideal spirit. People who found their interests entangled in the pursuits and pleasures of this present life had an uncomfortable sense of wrong, and felt that they ought to be ashamed of themselves.

This doctrine of the relation of the world which now is to the world which is to come expresses a profound truth. The present takes a great part of its significance from the future. To-morrow depends upon to-day. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Our whole life, present and future, is bound up together. This is so everlastingly true that some have been led by it to question the possibility of a universal salvation. They perceive that those who live in certain ways bring upon themselves at first pain and then weakness, presently

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serious and mortal sickness, and at last the death of the body. They perceive a like process in the mind, a similar connection between certain ways of using or not using or ill-using the mind, and the sure loss of apprehension and of appreciation. People may so live that they cannot enter into the higher joys. They infer a like death of the soul. If one who breaks the laws of his body loses his body, shall not one who breaks the laws of his soul lose his soul?

Important, however, as such considerations are, they no longer interest us quite as they did our ancestors. We are intent upon the world in which we actually and immediately live. The salvation for which we greatly care is not a future blessing,—though we care for that,—it is a present possession. How to be saved to-day, how to be happy to-day, how to make the most of the opportunity of this day,—that is what we have in mind. Whether for better or for worse, that is the honest situation.

Thus there is a shifting of the centre

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of gravity of the religious life from faith to works ; or, rather, from a faith which expresses itself in creeds, to a faith which expresses itself in deeds. The prevailing purpose of the modern church is to increase the daily happiness of men. The missionary goes, not as of old to rescue men from eternal damnation, but to increase both the goodness and the joy of the present life. He used to preach the wrath of God ; now he preaches the love of God for every living soul. There is a new emphasis on the social aspects of Christianity. The parish house is a symbol of it. The social settlement is an illustration of it. The aim of the endeavors which are thus represented is plain, practical, and immediate. Here is scant patience with postponement, and no disposition whatever to alleviate the distress and injustice of present conditions by telling people that it will be all right after they are dead. The purpose is to make things right now, to bring the kingdom of heaven down, to increase the common stock of goodwill and happiness.

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But when we come to consider salvation as a present possession, and to ask, "How may we attain it?" we perceive that there are various answers. Everybody is trying to attain it, but there are a great many very different approaches. The saint retires from the world to fast and pray; that is his idea of a good time. The scholar heaps his desk with books; the glutton heaps his board with food and drink; the merchant betakes himself to his merchandise, the idler to his indolence,—all for the same purpose. Along these different paths, all are trying to get to the same goal. And the difference indicates different temperaments, so that the joy of one would be the death of the other. But there is one universal and veracious test. There is one way of proving every endeavor after salvation or happiness in order to ascertain its real value. This is the test of persistence. For it is characteristic of true happiness that it lasts. It is good to-day, but it is not good for much unless it remains until to-morrow. If it brings a present joy,

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but brings with it a future regret, or pain, or bitterness of remorse, it is not a valuable possession. And if it operates only under favoring but uncertain conditions, it is not of any abiding value. People used to tell time by sun-dials, but the difficulty was that the dial depended on the shining of the sun. The clock was invented in order to enable us to tell time in all weathers, and in the middle of the night. After that, the sun-dial became an anachronism, or a curious ornament.

It is accordingly plain that some kinds of happiness must be counted out. We may not attach great value to the happiness which depends on health of body; for sickness comes, and this excellent happiness departs. We cannot be saved by appetite. Neither may we attach much value to the happiness which depends upon the balance at the bank: for riches, according to the old proverb, have long since discovered the secret of aerial flight; away they go, and those who have relied upon them are disconsolate. Neither may we place a very high

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estimate upon the happiness which is bound up with the integrity of the social order, for though the approbation of the community is a precious reward of our endeavors, and the love of friends sweetens all life, these, too, are transitory; minds may change, misunderstandings may arise, death may come, and we may be deprived of the things in which our life seemed to consist. Neither prosperity nor society can save us.

We have got to have for our present salvation a happiness which shall continue in spite of sickness, and poverty, and persecution, and bereavement. In order to be happy, we must be able to face triumphantly the heaviest assaults of pain, of disappointment, of failure, of distress of soul. Whoever is living in a house which may be swept away by any storm of temporal disaster has built upon the shifting sand. You recognize in these references the beginning and the end of the Sermon on the Mount. The theme of that sermon is the salvation of the soul. It begins with a series of splendid sentences in

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which Christ sets forth the conditions of an abiding and victorious happiness. The Master looks out over the multitude and proposes to tell them how to be happy. Some of you, he says, are poor, some are sad, some are grievously tempted, some are persecuted; that need make no difference. You may all be blessedly happy. You may all set the house of your serene content upon the everlasting rock. That rock, to give it a single, convenient name, is religion. The salvation of the soul of man, the invincible joy of the heart of man, is to be found in religion.

The lives of good Christians to this very hour prove this assertion. It is not an ecclesiastical dogma, nor a metaphysical proposition. It is a verifiable statement, open to common observation. You must every one of you know somebody who lacks most of the customary means of happiness, and yet is abundantly and abidingly happy. You must know sick persons who are marvellously patient, and afflicted persons who are wonderfully brave. And you know, also, that their explanation

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of their strength is given in terms of religion.

But religion is a large and vague word. There are two questions which we desire to ask: What have these persons found in religion which has given them this strong serenity of spirit? and, How have they found it?

What have they found? They have found the meaning of the world. They have, it is true, an imperfect understanding of the matter, but it is a sufficient understanding. They have discovered beyond all peradventure that this world is the world of God our Father; He made it and maintains it. They know that all our life proceeds under His providential ordering. They have arrived at an invincible conviction that things are right. The world is good.

And they have found strength against sin. They have not escaped temptation, nor are they free even from failure. They are still contending with the world, the flesh, and the devil. But they are in receipt of reënforcements. They have been given access

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to a new base of supplies. They have got the key to an armory of the soul. And they are putting the devil under their feet. They are no longer servants to sin. They are living under a splendid declaration of independence. They are breathing the clear, invigorating air of a new freedom.

This they have found — the meaning of the world, and the mastery of the soul. When we ask, How have they found it? the answer is that they have come into this strong position of understanding and of victory by the help of Jesus Christ: by the supremacy and by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

By the supremacy of Christ comes a knowledge of the meaning of the world.

The supreme personality in the whole course of history is Jesus Christ. His place has no parallel. He has entered into all thought, all literature, all human progress; and to-day, after all the centuries, is mightier than ever. He is the Son of Man, the flower of humanity; He is the Son of God, the manifestation of the divine nature. Therefore,

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we may take His word as our highest truth about the world. He knows better than we do, a thousand times. When He looks up in the midst of His sorrows, His disappointments, His failures, in the midst of the profound tragedy of His life, and speaks to God as His father, He assures us that this is a good world, after all; and we receive His saying. Remember how it was said of a great man that he was able to see stars where his neighbors could see nothing but gray cloud. That is what Jesus did. He had both sight and insight. He perceived with the certainty of personal experience, and declared with the assurance of personal knowledge, that the love of God and the pain of man are not inconsistent. Thus He revealed the meaning of the world.

As by the supremacy of Christ comes the revelation of the significance of the world, so by the sacrifice of Christ comes the mastery of the soul; we get strength against sin.

The supreme revealing act in the life of Jesus Christ was His death. It

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summed up all that He did and taught, and was and is. For the death of Christ showed His understanding of sin. To Him, it was immeasurably serious, awful, and hateful. In contending against it, He was willing even to give His life. He did not need to do it. He might have lived in peace and quiet. His perception of the nature of sin compelled Him. But He went, like an errant knight, and fought it. Also, the death of Christ showed His love of man. It was for us He suffered, to save us out of the misery and death of sin. For love of us He climbed with unimaginable pain to those sublime heights of which He spoke when He said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And thus revealing His hatred of sin and His love of man, He disclosed the heart of God. That is how God feels. Then we understand that when we sin, we grieve the heart of God. God is not our "great taskmaster," though a noble poet called Him by that name; He is our Father. And in the sacrifice

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of Christ is added to the divine fatherhood a quality diviner still. For sacrifice is the highest thing in life. To love is much, to love and serve is more, but so to love and serve as to forget ourselves, and give ourselves utterly, without shadow of reservation, without count of cost,—this is the supreme thing. Nothing is better than this. The cross revealed this in the relation of God to man. How can we offend Him who so loved the world?

Two kinds of confusion have obscured and made difficult the doctrine of the atonement.

One is a confusion of fact with philosophy. The fact is that Christ died for our sins. The philosophy is the explanation of the effectiveness of His death to save us. The fact shines like the stars; the philosophy varies like the theories of the astronomers. But the fact only is of essential importance. The other confusion is of the nearer with the farther side of truth. The formula of the farther side is in the words, "This is the Lamb of God which taketh away the

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sin of the world." Here we enter into the mysteries. But the formula of the nearer side is in the words : "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." The father of the prodigal son needs not to be reconciled ; he is ever waiting for the opportunity to show his unchanged love. It is the prodigal who is to be reconciled, and this is accomplished when he perceives his condition, and returns to the welcome which awaits him. Mysteries, indeed, remain ; there are hard sayings still uninterpreted ; but in that parable is the atonement on its nearer side. God, whose hatred of sin and love of man is revealed in the cross of Christ, desires our allegiance and our love. When we give it, we are reconciled to Him. We enter into the joy of God. We experience the salvation of our souls.



# **THE LIFE EVERLASTING**



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## THE LIFE EVERLASTING



S for happiness hereafter, it is mightily reassuring to see the certainty of the saints.

St. Paul has no doubt about it. "We know," he says. He confesses that the times are hard. We are troubled on every hand; we are perplexed, persecuted, cast down. But we are not distressed, not in despair, not discouraged. We perceive that these hardships enable us to enter into the fellowship of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. We are assisted to endure these trials by the inspiration of His example.

We perceive also that these are but incidents in a life eternal. They are the inevitable discomforts of a journey through this world to the world to come. We are able to endure them cheerfully because we look through and beyond them to our final destination.

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Thus our Lord, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross. Thus our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

These words take the doctrine of immortality out of the realm of speculation, and bring it into vital touch with the working day. St. Paul, undertaking great tasks under conditions of unusual difficulty, finds it the very breath of his life. If we are of a somewhat different mind to-day, it is for the most part the natural result of a reaction. We have come out of a time when religion was preached as pertaining mainly to the other world. The supreme business of this life, we were told, is to make ourselves ready for the next, and the next world was set before us in detail. In particular, the miseries of hell were impressed upon our minds. Most of us who have

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come to middle age had dreadful moments in our childhood when we thought it very likely that we should come at last to that place of torment. Now the emphasis of interest has changed. The light which shines upon the stage of our human affairs shines in another place, and all this side of religion is for the moment in the shadow. Our supreme concern as Christians is in the betterment of this present world. We do not think once about the life to come, where our fathers thought of it a thousand times.

St. Paul held the two great interests together. He was greatly concerned about social betterment; he addressed himself to the relief of the poor of Jerusalem, and took up a contribution for them everywhere he went; his persistent purpose was to bring justice, righteousness, peace, and fraternity into every place where he had influence. But in all this he found himself strengthened, compelled, directed, encouraged, by the significance which is brought into this world by its relation with the world to come. His

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citizenship, as he said, was in heaven. His business was to found colonies which should live according to the laws of heaven. The arrival of information that the kingdom of heaven had ceased to exist, — that, in fact, there is no heaven at all, — would have affected the mission of St. Paul as a like piece of tragic news would affect any ambassador of a foreign power. No doubt he would have gone on being good and doing good according to his best ability, but the heart would have been taken out of his endeavors. He would have lost his sense of divine mission. He could say no longer in the face of immediate failure: "I cannot fail; behind me is the everlasting power of God."

This is true still. We may not think so definitely of the other world as our ancestors did; it may not enter so consciously into our common life, but it is as necessary to us as the universal air. We may take it for granted, as we are accustomed to take many of our essential blessings; we may account it a matter of course and give our attention to other matters; but we per-

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ceive, upon the least reflection, that we cannot get along without it. Our idea of the meaning of our life, whatever patience we maintain in the midst of disappointment, whatever persistence we show in the difficult task of doing good, our subordination of the material side of the world beneath the spiritual, our sense of values, our strength and comfort in sorrow, our refuge in affliction, — all this depends on our assurance of the immortality of the soul.

The only reasonable argument against the immortality of the soul is the death of the body.

The body dies, and, so far as we can see, all individual existence ceases. There is no response. There is no manifestation of continued life. The students of psychical research encourage us to believe that they may eventually bring light into this deep darkness, but such light as they have brought thus far is not enough to see by. The ordinary evidence of our senses denies the doctrine of the immortality of man.

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To this denial an obvious reply is that death is one of the oldest of all facts.

From the beginning of time, death has confronted life. So far as the death of the body constitutes an argument against the immortality of the soul, it was as valid a contradiction a hundred thousand years ago as it is to-day. But it has never prevailed. The argument is plain enough, and makes its appeal to the reason of every man, but it has never been effective. It comes, indeed, with crushing weight in the moment of affliction. For many a grieving heart it turns the earth and the sky alike into a horror of great darkness. But the soul of man recovers.

Nothing happens to show that the argument of death is invalid in any particular. There it is, and we cannot gainsay it. But we do gainsay it. The primitive man, contemporary with the glaciers, buries in the grave of his dead the symbols of his faith in immortality. Confronting the unanswerable facts, he cries, "My friend is dead, but

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he shall live again !” And this cry of hope, of confidence, of victory, has been repeated every day since life and death began. It is evident that something is the matter with an argument which is at the same time so plain and so everlastingly unconvincing.

The psychologists, in their examination of the argument, find several things the matter with it.

It is criticised by Professor Royce on the ground that it takes no account of the affirmation of individuality.

Among the many uncertainties of our life, one thing is absolutely sure, and that is that we are ourselves. You are yourself, and nobody else. Nobody in the world can possibly be so like you as to be you. Philosophy is doubtful about things, and has sometimes denied the reality of the visible world, but it is sure of persons. It is sure, also, that personality is not dependent on the body. The body perishes and is dissolved into its constituent elements, but the individual cannot perish.

The position that death is an argu-

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ment against the continuance of individual life is criticised also by Professor James, on the ground that it confuses the transmissive with the productive functions of the brain.

The point of the common argument against immortality is that there can be no thought without a brain. This is apparently true when we set it alongside of the proposition that there can be no steam without fire and water; the fire acting on the water produces steam. But it is absurd when we set it alongside of the proposition that there can be no light without a prism. The function of a prism is not to produce light, but to transmit it. The prism may be broken into a thousand pieces, but the light remains. Thus our conscious life is associated with the activity of our brain, as the world outside our room is associated with the window. The brain is the window through which we look into the world of reality. It is our present medium of communication between our self within and the world without. It is a reasonable belief that at death, when

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this medium of communication is disused, some other takes its place. The window opens, and out we go into a new and better sight of the real world, into a new and more intimate relation with it. The fact that there is no more window does not signify the abolition either of the world or of ourselves ; it signifies only some other point of view.

Turning now from the only serious argument against the future life, — the unconvincing argument of death, — we find a positive assurance of immortality in human nature and in divine revelation.

This assurance is based in human nature upon two foundations : upon the expectation of the race, and upon the worth of the individual.

Each of these foundations has come into clearer light in our own time. In a day when the philosophy of materialism prevails, the only facts which count for much are those which come within the province of the natural sciences. Facts, in order to be facts, and especially in order to be arguments, must be capable of weight and measurement,

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and must respond to the tests of the laboratory. Under such conditions, ideas are easily disregarded, and emotional and spiritual phenomena are set at naught. But the defect of materialism is precisely in this arbitrary solution of facts. The materialist leaves out of consideration a great part of the actual world; he omits the inconvenient facts which do not agree with his conclusion; and the result is that a larger vision of life makes his conclusions ridiculous.

Then we perceive that a universal human expectation is a fact to be as seriously considered as a universal law of gravitation.

There it is, always and everywhere present in the mind of man. There it is, triumphantly confronting the physical fact of death. It is one of the human qualities, one of the permanent factors in any accurate description of man. Man is an animal who expects to live forever. Now, a universal human quality must be the assurance of a universal reality, or else God has put us to confusion. If man is made expecting a

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life which goes on after death, and then at death dies like a weed, we are the plaything of malignant forces. On the contrary, a universal spiritual fact is like a universal physical fact; it is the evidence of an everlasting law of being.

So, also, with the worth of the individual.

With the discrediting of materialism we begin to deal with the whole man. In the material realm, the eminent facts are force and matter; in the spiritual realm the eminent facts are consciousness, personality, thought, will, and love. And to all this we apply the doctrine of the conservation of value. The material facts persist; on they go, through manifold transformations, into existence without end. What shall we say as to the spiritual facts? Shall oxygen and hydrogen continue, while faith and reverence and self-sacrifice and honor and affection perish? "The idea of immortality is an assertion of the indestructible worth of the values that characterize humanity at its best." And these values are

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not satisfied by any immortality of lasting influence, or by any merging of the soul of man into the soul of the universe. They demand a conscious, individual existence. Justice and truth and love have no meaning apart from persons. Personality itself is one of the precious facts of human life. Man has been too long in growing, through the ages of the universe, to live a few years, to make a beginning of an endless life, and then perish. Man is of too much value to be outlived by a stone wall, or even by a mountain.

To these foundations of the assurance of immortality in human nature, — in the expectation of the race, and in the worth of the individual, — we add the foundations which are disclosed by divine revelation. We turn from the common experience of common people to the uncommon experience of uncommon people.

The significance of this uncommon experience may be expressed in one or other of two ways: we may say that there are persons to whom God may speak with the expectation of being

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understood ; or we may say that there are persons who are peculiarly sensitive to the spiritual world, as others are sensitive to the world of music, of art, or of natural phenomena. In either case, we are speaking of that special perception of religious truth which is called revelation. It is plain that there are outstanding men who see more than their neighbors. In consequence of this sight, some of them make discoveries, some of them put forth inventions, some of them write abiding books. The materials with which they deal are common to us all, but they handle them with a conviction and a result which is beyond our power. It is plain that the uncommon religious people know more about God than we do. They are not always able to give clear reasons for their conclusions ; sometimes the reasons which they give do not satisfy us ; but we perceive that they have somehow come into relation with divine truth at first hand. And what they say has convincing influence with us, for that reason.

Sometimes the men are uncommon

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men, such as St. Paul, with his direct perception of the fact of the spiritual body. Sometimes the uncommonness is in the experience, as in the case of those disciples who with their own eyes saw the risen Lord.

This experience is at the heart of Christian history. It made Christianity possible and actual. The existence of the Christian religion is an evidence of it. The Lord of truth and life, the Son of God, speaks His great words, and does His great deeds, and is met with indifference and with hostility. He comes unto His own, and His own receive Him not. Down He goes day by day, amidst the forsaking of friends and the increase of enemies, into that valley of the shadow of death where the cross awaits Him. The cross is the logical and inevitable end of His life. It sets the seal to a career of failure.

But the end is only the beginning. The disciples, whom the tragedy of the crucifixion had scattered, who had gone every man to his own, who had lost heart and hope, suddenly appear

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transformed. They have been changed from cowards to heroes. They are filled with a joy for which articulate speech is wholly inadequate, which can find no better expression than the tongues of Pentecost. They have a sense of final victory, of absolute triumph over all the world, which makes persecution insignificant. It is not only one of the most remarkable, but one of the most determining facts of history; for it has changed the whole face of society. The whole Christian movement to this day goes back for explanation to the experience of the disciples.

They said, "We have seen the Lord." They said: "The strong desire of all the race is at last answered. Out of the regions of death one has come back to tell us in plain words that our faith is valid. Christ is risen from the dead; we shall rise also. He lives, and His life is our assurance that after death the soul of man goes on into life eternal." This message they brought immediately to their neighbors, and it confirmed the universal human hope.

Thus it comes to us. We always

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knew that the fact of death is an unconvincing argument against the life of the spirit. We perceive that our common experience discloses the expectation of the race and the worth of the individual. And here is a confirmation of our faith. Here is another fact to set over against the fact of the death of the body. Here is a revelation of God to the soul of man. Christ says, "Because I live, ye shall live also; he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." The sight of Him, victorious over death and alive forevermore, is the final assurance of our immortality.

The discussion of the elements of religious believing and living ends, indeed, as it began, with mystery. Out of the mysterious past we came; into the mysterious future we go. And the factor of mystery makes all our equations indeterminate. It prevents religion from appealing to the mind of man with the convincing arguments of logic. It removes the consideration of religion from the regions of science, of mathematics, and of intellectual

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certainty. It invites the emotions and the aspirations to help to solve the problem.

But the problem, nevertheless, is solved. Religion, especially as manifested in Jesus Christ, presents the only interpretation of the world which is consistent with the worth of man, and satisfying to the soul. This is a good world, still in the making. The débris of construction confuses our eyes, because we have only a dim idea of the complete plan. But the plan is in process, under the hand of God, for our good, for our happiness in this present life and in a life to come.



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